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CRITERIA FOR GOODNESS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE TASTES,
PREFERENCES AND PURPOSES OF INDIVIDUALS: A CRITICAL
STUDY OF A DISPUTE IN CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL THEORY

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend
to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled
CRITERIA FOR GOODNESS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE TASTES, PREFERENCES
AND PURPOSES OF INDIVIDUALS: A CRITICAL STUDY OF A DISPUTE IN
CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL THEORY, submitted by Douglas Mustard in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of the opposing positions of R.M. Hare and P. Foot on the question whether the individual affects criteria for goodness. Hare asserts, while Foot denies, that the individual may affect criteria for goodness. The thesis is an attempt to explain the unacknowledged roots of the conflict between the two positions.

Although the theories are presented as accounts of the way things are, and therefore to be adopted or rejected for reasons external to the theories themselves, it is my contention that many of the arguments, especially those put forward by Foot, are arguments which are themselves ultimately based on the assumption of the correctness of the theory.

In the first two sections I consider certain situations involving the use of the word 'good' which it is plausible to suggest do arise, and discuss the probable responses of Hare and Foot to these actual uses of 'good' which might be considered to be counter-examples to each analysis.

In Sections III and IV, I consider the conflict from a more theoretical point of view. In particular, the notions of 'the purpose for' and 'the function of' an object, are examined with respect to Foot's analysis.

The suggestion begins to be developed that at many points in the argument between Hare and Foot, there is likely to be disagreement on the procedures which should be used to establish the disputed point. I suggest that the differences between procedures which Hare and Foot

would likely advocate are analogous to (although certainly not necessarily correlated with) differences between political systems which people advocate.

The notion of correctness, to which many of Foot's arguments appeal, is examined in Section V, and an attempt is made to show why this dispute cannot be settled in this way.

The conclusion of the thesis is that the disagreement of Hare and Foot over the correct analysis of 'good' stems from disagreement over what should be regarded as the proper framework from within which the analysis of 'good' should properly proceed; that without agreement here, the dispute must remain unsettled. An implication of my thesis, which I do not pursue, is that such agreement would involve more than linguistic considerations.

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This thesis is concerned with a particular philosophical dispute, the dispute between R.M. Hare and P. Foot concerning the logic of the word 'good'.

Hare believes that there is a connection between a speaker's choices and a speaker's use of the word 'good'. In Hare's theory, the paradigm or standard or characteristic case of the use of the word 'good' is one for which the appropriate thought "has something to do with choosing or being inclined to choose".¹ One calls an object good if it is an object one chooses, or would be inclined to choose. It follows, according to this theory, that in deciding what to choose, one is deciding what one will subsequently call good.

Foot denies that the choices of the speaker are ever a sufficient or necessary condition for the use of the word 'good'.² She denies that one can call something good merely because one chooses it:

Such a theory could not be right, for instance, for the use of 'good' in the expression 'a good knife'; the man who uses these words correctly must use them in conjunction with particular criteria of goodness; those which really are criteria for the goodness of knives.

(GC p.46)

Foot's thesis is that the criteria for the goodness of each and every kind of thing "are always determined, and not a matter for decision".

(GC p.47)

1

R.M. Hare, Language of Morals, (hereinafter referred to as 'LM'), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1952, p.105.

2

P. Foot, "Goodness and Choice", (hereinafter referred to as 'GC'), Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary volume 35, 1961, p.60.

My concern is not with the particular thesis that a speaker's choices are a sufficient or necessary condition for the use of the word 'good', but rather with the more general thesis that an individual speaker can affect the criteria of goodness. Hare's thesis asserts that a speaker can affect the criteria of goodness; according to his theory, a speaker, through his choices, determines the criteria of the things he or she will call good. In criticizing Hare's theory, Foot not only criticizes his assertion that a speaker's choices determine the criteria of goodness, but she further suggests that a speaker cannot in any way affect the criteria of goodness, which are always determined and not a matter for decision. She similarly suggests that "a man can no more decide for himself what is evidence for rightness and wrongness than he can decide what is evidence for monetary inflation or a tumour on the brain".³

My concern is to examine the claims of Hare and Foot in this particular dispute, and to attempt to clarify some points about the nature of the claims, in the hope that this clarification can be applied to the more general dispute over claims that "there is no logical connection between statements of fact and statements of value, so that each man makes his own decision as to the facts about an action which are relevant to its evaluation" (MA p.504).

An example of a use of 'good' which might be considered to illustrate Hare's analysis, is one which might occur during a husband

3

P. Foot, "Moral Arguments" (hereinafter referred to as 'MA'), Mind, 1958, p.505.

and wife's shopping excursion to a cheese counter. The purpose of the excursion is to select a piece of cheese. One spouse, after surveying the selection for some time, holds up a wedge of cheese and says to the other, "Here's a good piece. Do you agree?" The other answers, "Yes, I think it's the best piece". They put that wedge in their shopping basket and move on. Although a very similar scene is probably repeated by innumerable couples, the kind of cheese selected by one couple very often differs from that selected by others. One couple may prefer to eat slightly mouldy, soft, crumbly medium Ontario cheddar cheese, and will choose a piece accordingly. Another couple may prefer completely different cheese, choose a piece accordingly, and call that a good piece. The criteria for cheddar cheese which are generally used are, I believe, firmness and freshness. The details do not matter; what matters is that the participants in one case may be using criteria for their use of 'good' which, as a matter of fact, are very much different from those used by another couple, or from those of society generally. Yet in each case, the piece of cheese selected will usually be called good. This would suggest that criteria used as a basis for calling some object 'good' do, as a matter of fact, differ. It would seem that there must be some dispute over whether this is the same as saying that the criteria of goodness differ; otherwise, it would appear obvious that criteria of goodness do differ, and that it is not the case that the criteria of goodness are determined and not a matter for decision.

What is meant by 'criteria' in 'criteria of goodness'? It

might be objected that, in the example I gave, the criteria are not different; that in all cases the criterion for selecting cheese and calling it good is 'that which I, the chooser, prefer to eat'. This raises a problem concerning the word 'criteria'. What counts as a criterion? What sorts of things are criteria?

If 'firm', 'soft', 'mouldy', 'yellow', 'crumbly' are words for the sorts of things which count as criteria, then those agreeing with Hare's position would argue that the criteria of goodness are affected by a speaker's choices. In this sense, the word 'criteria' is used to refer to descriptive characteristics of the object being called good. (To stop the explanation here is to assume that we all agree on what constitutes a descriptive characteristic. To determine how it can be decided when two or more people understand the same thing by a word, is beyond the scope of this paper).

If, however, the criterion of goodness is something like 'that which I prefer to eat' or (getting rid of a reference to any specific purpose) 'that which I prefer' or 'that which I would choose', then Hare would not argue that a speaker's choices could affect the criterion of goodness. This second sense seems to approximate what Hare refers to as the meaning of the word. Affecting criteria when the word is used in this latter sense, would be affecting, for example, whether the criterion for the use of the word 'good' was either (a) 'that X which I would choose', or else (b) 'that X which I would reject'. It seems certain that Hare would disagree that a speaker could decide to use (b) as criterion for his use of 'good' and that the speaker could then go

around calling all those things which he abhors and rejects 'good' X's. For Hare, the limits of the speaker's effect on the use of the word 'good' are determined insofar as the thought appropriate to the standard or paradigmatic use of 'good' just is "a thought which has something to do with choosing or being inclined to choose". One has no choice about that. An individual cannot decide to use 'good' in connection with some other thought. One cannot decide to use as criterion for 'good', a thought (to use Hare's language) having something to do with rejecting or being inclined to reject. According to Hare, the range of descriptive characteristics of a class of objects which one can use as the basis for calling one of that class a good object, is unlimited. It is in one's choosing of an object that one determines which characteristics will be used as a basis for the use of the word 'good'; namely, those characteristics for which the object was chosen. However, according to Hare, one has no choice about the fact that it is one's choice of objects which determines the descriptive-characteristic criteria for the use of 'good'.

Foot asserts that a man cannot choose the criteria for such things as good coal, good pens, and/or good knives. Hare would disagree; his thesis asserts that the speaker can choose for himself what characteristics of those items will count as criteria for goodness, but his thesis also implies that the speaker cannot choose whether the word 'good' will be related to his choices in a positive, or whether in a negative, way. One is tempted to ask Hare why a man can choose in the one case, and cannot choose in the other.

Some people might argue that, in the cheese situation, the criterion used in all cases is the same ('that which I, the speaker, prefer to eat'), and so the shopping participants are never choosing the criteria for the use of 'good' themselves. But those people may still be wrong. The participants may not be choosing cheese to eat, but rather to give to a friend with a different taste in cheese from theirs, or to give as a vengeance gift to an enemy, or even to obtain as a piece of stage property for a play. Faced with these cases, the objectors might still attempt to maintain the position that the participants do not choose the criteria themselves, by claiming that the criterion in all cases is 'that which I, the speaker, choose or would tend to choose'. In that case, while they and Hare would be denying and asserting, respectively, that the words 'the speaker can choose for himself the criteria of goodness' apply to the situation, they would actually be in agreement. That is, they would agree that some speakers can use firmness and orangeness as a basis for choosing cheese and calling it good, while other can use softness and yellowness as a basis.

The parties would be disagreeing over the meaning of 'criteria'. Does 'criteria' refer to the descriptive characteristics of an object, or does 'criterion for goodness' refer to a more general phrase like 'that which I would choose'? If the former, then according to Hare, the criteria for 'good cheese' vary; if the latter, then even according to Hare, the criterion is always the same.

It is important to keep in mind this question about what count

as criteria. Before one can reasonably debate whether criteria for goodness are determined or are not determined, it is preferable that the disputants agree on what 'criteria' means. For example, in "Moral Arguments" Foot uses the word 'rude' in an attempt to show that an evaluative word may be entailed by certain facts or criteria. One of these criteria she explains as follows: ". . . the situation in which it is correct to say that a piece of behaviour is rude, is, I think, that this kind of behaviour causes offence by indicating lack of respect" (p.507). If this is to count as a criterion, according to Foot, then it may be that those who want to deny that certain facts entail certain evaluative conclusions, may well agree that this is a sufficient condition for the use of 'rude', but disagree as to what sort of behaviour is to count as behaviour causing offence by indicating lack of respect. Hare might agree that the factor mentioned by Foot was a sufficient condition for the use of 'rude', but would then not agree that this factor was a criterion, but would instead claim that the factor was related to the word 'rude' in a similar way as a thought that "has something to do with choosing or being inclined to choose" is related to the word 'good'. Thus, just as Hare would argue that the relationship of the latter thought with 'good' was determined, and not a matter of choice, he might agree that the relationship between the word 'rude' and the factor mentioned by Foot, is also determined. But he might still disagree with any suggestion that the criteria for 'rude' were determined, asserting that any determination of which physical actions were to be considered as behaviour causing

offence by indicating lack of respect, would be a matter for individual decision.

To disagree that the criteria (e.g. for goodness) are determined, therefore might mean that one disagrees at one or more of several points. In the case of 'good', for example, one might disagree that it was determined that the appropriate thought is one of choosing or being inclined to choose. Most certainly Hare would argue that that aspect of the use of 'good' was determined, and not a matter for individual decision. On the other hand, in such a case as 'a good apple', Hare would want to say that it is not determined that 'red' and 'firm', nor any other particular descriptive characteristics, are the criteria for goodness. In the case of 'good', what counts as criteria for Hare, are descriptive characteristics -- or, in fact any categorization other than the relation to choosing. Unless otherwise indicated, I shall use 'criteria' throughout in the descriptive-characteristic sense.

A dispute over whether criteria of goodness are determined or not, might thus be based on a dispute over what sort of things should be properly called criteria. There is implicit in the Hare-Foot controversy an element of this dispute. While Hare appears to count descriptive characteristics such as redness, sweetness and juiciness as criteria, Foot at times appears to consider phrases of a more general nature as criteria; for example, 'cutting well' (GC p.48) or 'the kind of behaviour that causes offence by indicating lack of respect' (MA p.507). Such a dispute may reduce to a claim by either side that

the other's use of the word 'criteria' is incorrect. This aspect, of correct usage, will be discussed in Section V. I do not surgest, however, that the Hare-Foot dispute is simply a dispute over the correct use of 'criteria'.

If the criteria for goodness in 'a good A' are always determined, what is it that determines what the criteria are?

Consider one possible answer: that the thing in question determines the criteria. Foot says:

My thesis is not, of course, that criteria for each and every kind of thing are always determined in the same way as they are determined for such things as knives, but rather that they are always determined and not a matter for decision.

(GC p.47)

She also says:

Where a thing has a function the primary (but by no means necessarily the only) criterion for the goodness of that thing will be that it fulfils its function well.

(GC p.48)

Can she reasonably be interpreted as suggesting that the thing in question, the physical object, determines the criteria? Many physical objects of the same appearance are used for different purposes: an object which we call a board of wood may be used for a gang-plank, or for a table-top, or for a bookshelf. It might make a good bookshelf but a bad gang-plank. It seems evident that Foot must hold that the word by which the thing is called, and not the thing itself, contributes the criteria of goodness. It seems that in the latter quotation she is not making a distinction between an object and the word or words

by which that object may be called. The physical object which she suggests should be called 'good citizen' and which she claims is not a 'good daughter', is the same physical object. If the thing itself determines the criteria of goodness, then whatever the name by which the object is called, the criteria of goodness should remain the same. But this is obviously not the case: a man may be a good father and a bad husband, a good employee and a bad singer. While Foot does talk about "the goodness of each and every kind of thing", she later indicates that she believes it is the word by which the thing is called which contributes the criteria of goodness, by indicating in her knife-marker example and in her daughter-citizen example, that differences in the words by which a thing should be called affect the criteria of goodness. The connection she sees is not between certain criteria of goodness and certain physical objects, but between certain criteria of goodness and certain words which might be applied to these objects. This is indicated by her statement "We have now described two classes of words whose meaning determines criteria of goodness for the things they name" (GC p.51).

Consider another answer which might at first seem plausible: that the word 'A' contributes or determines the criteria. If this is taken to mean the spoken or written word 'A' as it appears in an utterance of the type 'a good A', then in some cases it is very obvious that the word 'A' does not contribute or determine the criteria of goodness. Consider the remark "Here's a good piece" (c.f. p.3). Would someone claim that, since this is an example of an utterance of 'a good A',

that therefore the 'A' in some way determines the criteria of goodness? It appears unlikely that anyone would claim that in the case of 'a good piece' the question of whether or not the word 'good' should be applied depends on the meaning of 'piece'.

Someone might object that 'a good piece' is incomplete, that it requires some phrase to complete it (e.g. 'of cheese'), and that it is this completing-word which determines the criteria of goodness in this instance. I do not deny that 'a good piece' is incomplete. My point is merely that, if the uttered sentence is written down, the criteria for the use of 'good' are not always determined by the word which appears next to 'good' (e.g. 'piece'). This example serves to show that in language -- as it is used -- there are words which, while not stated, are understood as forming part of the sentence. The significance of this point is this: if, in some cases, 'of cheese' is to be understood as completing 'a good piece', then (a) how is one to tell which word or phrase should be understood as completing the sentence? and (b) how is one to tell whether there are even more words to be understood as belonging to the sentence, as in 'a good piece (of cheese) (for my purposes)'? If it cannot be agreed which words are to be understood as completing the sentence, then there will be disagreements over judgements about 'a good A'. While it may be obvious that in the example I gave, 'a good piece' should be completed by 'of cheese', it is not always as obvious which words should complete the sentence. For if one person picks up an object and says 'This is a good morsel' when what is meant is 'This is a good morsel (of cheese)',

then someone who understands the remark to mean 'This is a good morsel (of food)' might well (if he disliked cheese) disagree that it was a good morsel. Similarly, even if the two both understood the remark to mean 'This is a good morsel (of cheese)', they might still disagree because one understands the remark to mean 'This is a good morsel (of cheese) (to eat)', while the other understands the remark to mean 'This is a good morsel (of cheese) (to bait a mousetrap)'.

That 'a good piece' or 'a good morsel' are not isolated examples can be seen by supplying similar contexts for other expressions. There are other examples of 'a good A' which would seem to be examples where the 'A' does not contribute the criteria of goodness: 'a good spot (to rest, to paint, to observe air-drills, to dump garbage, to park, to go swimming, to wade across)', 'a good group (of workers, of thinkers; to ask, to photograph)', 'a good book (to prop the door open with, to put one to sleep)', 'a good one' -- (Is it really a good 'one')?

Are we to say that the word 'spot' contributes the same criteria in all cases? If so, then one good spot should have the same good-making characteristics as another good spot. But if we were to ask the air-drill enthusiast what made him call that spot good, he would point to the air-drill; while if we were to ask the person resting what made him call his particular spot good, he would point to the very absence of such things as air-drills. If one is looking for a book of sufficient size to hold back a door from its newly-painted frame, one might well say 'Here's a good book' upon finding one. Or, if at bed-

time one is looking for something to read which would not be exciting, but on the contrary would tend to make one sleep, one might upon finding such a book say 'Here's a good novel (to put me to sleep)'.

It might be objected to these sorts of examples, that because the utterances are incomplete, they should not be used; or that one or the other of the examples I have described illustrate an incorrect use, or a misuse of language. (E.g. "One should not say 'This is a good morsel' when one means 'This is a good morsel of cheese to bait a mousetrap' "). This line of argument, so often the final line of defence of a linguistic theory, is considered in Section V.

The general disagreement I have with Foot is as to what (if any) elliptical phrases should be understood in cases like those above. Foot appears to imply that there are certain phrases which are understood, and also that there are certain phrases which cannot be, or should not be, or are not, understood as completing the statement. In the above example, Foot says of 'a good novel (to put one to sleep)', that one "could not say that for him this was the characteristic which made the novel a good novel" (GC p.53).

As it is the case that as a matter of fact people do use 'a good book' implying 'to put one to sleep' or 'to hold back the door' -- that is, since it is the case that people do use 'a good A' implying 'to y' (where y is variable) -- then it should be clarified in what sense certain y's cannot be, or are not, implied; and also how it is to be determined which y's cannot be, should not be, or are not implied. Foot's thesis suggests that, for each word, some y's are implied and

some are not. I believe that (a) it is impossible to establish any agreed-on procedure to determine -- from consideration of the uttered words alone -- which y is implied in every particular case, and (b) that Foot's thesis, as she states it, obscures crucial differences between statements of the form ' x is y ' which are about language, and ones of the same form which are about, say, physical objects.

If, as it appears, a critical aspect of the dispute concerns what phrases are, or should be, implied after certain other phrases, then to that extent this disagreement between Hare and Foot is not particularly an ethical one at all (as 'ethical' has traditionally been understood), nor is it a disagreement over ethical language only. It is a disagreement over broader aspects of language.

It would seem that some utterances of expressions like 'a good spot' and 'a good novel' are examples both of (a) utterances where the criteria for the speaker's use of 'good' may not be the usual criteria, and (b) utterances of 'a good A ' where the criteria for 'good' are not in some way determined by what the ' A ' is. One might claim that they are counter-examples to Foot's thesis. A particular way of attempting to discredit this claim, is to assert that such utterances are examples of 'a good A for X 's purposes'. It would appear that Foot would hold this position, and that she would then go on to say "But since it is one thing to speak of 'a good A ' and another to speak of 'a good A for so-and-so's purposes' this cannot be used to show anything about the use of the former expression" (GC p.53). Foot is, in this case, asserting that the particular elliptical phrase 'for so-and-so's

purposes' is not a correct or legitimate completion of the utterance 'a good A'. She is suggesting that one cannot, in saying 'a good A' be correctly understood to imply 'for so-and-so's purposes', or conversely, that one cannot correctly use as a basis for calling something a good A, that it is a good A for so-and-so's purposes.

If one grants that utterances of 'a good A' may sometimes be examples of 'a good A (for X's purposes)' or, more generally 'a good A (for y)', then one is faced with the problem that 'a good A (for y)' often appears in ordinary spoken or written language as 'a good A'. Foot as much as admits this is the case by describing such a situation as follows:

In such a context he will be able to attach the word 'good' even to such things as pebbles or twigs, implying 'for my purposes' or 'for someone playing this game'.

(GC p.53)

Foot admits that 'for his purposes' may only be implied, and may not be stated. Yet she asserts that it is a different thing to speak of 'a good A' and another thing to speak of 'a good A for X's purposes'. As both cases often appear in ordinary language as 'a good A', then it would seem that her remark must be interpreted to mean that it is a different thing to speak of 'a good A' when 'for X's purposes' is implied, and when it is not. If this is so, then one is faced with the problem of how to decide when an occurrence of 'a good A' in ordinary language is really an occurrence of 'a good A' simpliciter, and when it is an occurrence of 'a good A for X's purposes'. (For that matter, in view of the earlier discussion of elliptical phrases, one is faced

with the problem of whether there is ever an occurrence of 'a good A' simpliciter).

Foot should set out some procedure for one to decide when 'a good A' implies 'for his purposes' and when it does not. It seems apparent that whatever the procedure, it must rely on something other than the words 'a good A' themselves, if it is to determine in any particular case whether it is a simpliciter use or whether it is a 'for his purposes' use. And so it appears that in no case of examining the words 'a good. . .' outside of a particular context (a particular use by a particular speaker at a particular time) could one say whether it was really an occurrence of 'a good A' simpliciter or 'a good A for X's purposes'. One cannot tell from a consideration of the words alone, which 'y' is implied.

Even if one could decide on procedures to tell whether 'for his purposes' was implied, it would seem that there would still be disagreement as to whether this particular elliptical phrase was a legitimate or correct completion of the utterance 'a good A'. One might argue that it is incorrect to use 'a good A' when the elliptical phrase 'for his purposes' is implied. On the other hand, another might argue that the only correct or legitimate use of 'a good A' was when this elliptical phrase is implied. Foot states that "it is one thing to speak of 'a good A' and another to speak of 'a good A for so-and-so's purposes' ". But someone else might argue that to speak of 'a good A' is to speak of 'a good A for so-and-so's purposes', and that any attempt to separate 'a good A' from a reference to someone's pur-

poses, is an unwarranted attempt to absolutize standards of goodness.

The impossibility of telling, from consideration of the written words 'a good A' alone, what elliptical phrase is implied, if any, is illustrated even by cases of phrases like 'a good knife'. Foot and others spend much time discussing 'a good A' when 'A' is a functional word like 'knife'. But consider a situation in which people are looking for an agreed-on type of knife: perhaps it is a rusty one for a shipwrecked-sailor play; perhaps it is a toy doll's knife for a child's set; perhaps it is a linoleum knife. When one of the group finds an object of the kind he thinks will suit, he may very well hold that object up for the group to see and say 'Here's a good knife. Do you agree?' This appears to me to be a use of 'a good A', even in the case of the so-called functional word, where the criteria for 'good' are not the usual criteria for a good knife as I understand Foot to set them out:

Such a theory could not be right, for instance, for the use of 'good' in the expression 'a good knife'; the man who uses words correctly must use them in conjunction with particular criteria of goodness: those which really are the criteria for the goodness of knives.

(GC p.46)

By the inclusion of the word 'correctly', this quotation again indicates that the ultimate line of defence against the examples I have used in an attempt to counter Foot's thesis, would be a claim that the examples illustrate incorrect usage. The claim would be that, in the examples I suggested, the speakers would not be using 'good knife' correctly. Foot would probably claim that it is one

thing to speak of a good knife for a shipwrecked-sailor play, or for cutting linoleum, but it is another thing simply to speak of a good knife. Such an objection would again be a particular case of the general argument that it is incorrect to imply certain elliptical phrases after 'a good knife'. One holding Foot's position might say "One should not say 'a good A' when one means 'a good A for so-and-so's purposes'. Such usage is incorrect". I hope to show that, as in this case, most if not all the objections Foot offers to Hare's theory ultimately reduce to this charge of incorrect usage. In Section V, the notion of correct usage is examined.

In this Section, I have shown that (a) there are cases in which 'a good A' is used when the criteria used by the speaker for his utterance of 'good' are not established or determined by what the 'A' is, even if 'A' happens to be a functional word, and (b) that there are cases in which the criteria used by the speaker pertaining to an utterance of 'good' in 'a good A' may not be the usual criteria. I have also shown that Foot attempts to dismiss such examples by asserting that they are examples of 'a good A' with certain implied qualifications (e.g. for so-and-so's purposes), but that they indicate nothing about the use of 'a good A' simpliciter.

II

It might at first appear that Foot would take an even stronger stand with regard to certain types of words, for she says:

We have now described two classes of words whose meaning determines criteria of goodness for the things they name: functional words such as 'knife', 'pen', 'eye', and 'root', and non-functional words such as 'farmer', 'liar', and 'father'.

(GC p.51)

What would be her reply to the examples I have given of uses of different criteria for a use of 'good' even in the case of functional words? One possible reply could be that the examples illustrated incorrect uses of 'good' in conjunction with such functional words. Another possible reply would be that her statement does not apply to uses of 'good' in conjunction with those words when certain qualifying phrases are implied, (for example, 'for so-and-so's purposes'), but only applies in cases of uses of 'a good A' without such qualifying phrases.

If Foot were to take the latter position, as the statement ". . . it is one thing to speak of 'a good A' and another to speak of 'a good A for so-and-so's purposes'. . ." (GC p.53) would indicate she might, then one must re-examine the subject of the dispute. At first appears that Foot and Hare are disagreeing over the analysis of the word 'good' as it actually appears in the written and/or spoken language; specifically, in utterances of 'a good A'. But if Foot takes the position intimated by the above quotation, then she would not be claiming that her analysis is about all utterances of 'a good A' (for some of them imply 'for so-and-so's purposes'), but rather she would be

claiming that her analysis is about only those utterances in which such qualifying phrases are not implied.

In that case, Foot would be keeping out of her analysis any cases of 'a good A' where the individual, for his own purposes or reasons which are different from others', chooses an object and calls it good. But it is precisely these cases which feature prominently in Hare's analysis. The analyses of Hare and Foot would not conflict, in that event, in the sense that they would be analyses of different uses of 'a good A'. They would be conflicting, however, if one or the other or both claimed that utterances of 'a good A' should be based (or are correctly based) on the cases they include in their analyses; or if they claimed that utterances of 'a good A' should not be based on cases which the other includes in his or her analysis.

Are the criteria for goodness determined? If one eliminates from consideration in one's analysis any utterances of 'a good A' in which 'for so-and-so's purposes' is implied, then one might well be on the way to an analysis of 'a good A' in which the criteria for goodness are more or less standard. On the other hand, if one concentrates in one's analysis on utterances of 'a good A' which have been based on an individual's own conscious choice or decision, itself based on his own purposes and interests, then one might well be on the way to an analysis of 'a good A' in which the criteria for goodness are as varied as are human purposes and interests.

Foot objects (MA p.505-6) to a definition of terms which results in a philosopher having "bought security at the price of becoming a

bore". It would appear, however, that by claiming that it is one thing to speak of 'a good A' and another to speak of 'a good A for so-and-so's purposes', and consequently barring from consideration any utterances of 'a good A' when 'for so-and-so's purposes' is implied, she may be making her analysis susceptible to the same objection.

Furthermore, if Foot argues against the admissibility of an example because it is an example of 'a good A for so-and-so's purposes', and thus "cannot be used to show anything about the use of" the expression 'a good A', it would seem that one could reasonably reply that her own examples are examples of 'a good A -- for the usual purposes' and that therefore they show nothing about the use of 'a good A'.

At that point it would appear likely that the discussion would take the form of arguments purporting, on the one side, to show that correct uses of 'a good A' were based on 'for the usual purposes'; and on the other side, purporting to show that correct uses of 'a good A' were based on 'for so-and-so's purposes'. Such arguments would hinge on the notion of the correct usage.

It would be possible for the disputants to agree that, in actual fact, some uses of 'a good A' imply 'for the usual purposes', and some imply 'for so-and-so's purposes'; and that consequently in the former cases an individual's choices do not directly affect the criteria of goodness, which are more or less determined, but that in the latter cases, an individual does directly affect the criteria of goodness, which are therefore not determined in the way they are in the former

cases. But Hare and Foot seem unwilling to settle for this sort of compromise: Hare refers to the use with which he is mainly concerned as the proper evaluative use (from which the other use is derived); while Foot claims that the use with which she is mainly concerned is the correct use. Foot might well claim, in the face of any counter-examples concerning actual usage, that what people actually say has nothing to do with what the criteria for goodness are, explaining that in many cases people use 'good' incorrectly, and that in other cases they are using 'a good A' in the sense of 'a good A -- for X's purposes' or 'a good A -- from X's point of view', neither of which show anything about the proper use of 'a good A'.

The uses of 'a good A' which I have referred to in an attempt to show that the criteria used by a speaker for his use of the word 'good' may not in fact be the usual, have mainly had to do with purposes for which the A is to be used, or roles for which the A is picked. And indeed, what distinguishes these uses from the uses with which Foot is mainly concerned, is that these purposes or roles differ from those she considers determine the criteria of goodness; e.g. 'a good knife -- for this stage play' versus 'a good knife -- for cutting efficiently'; 'a good bed -- to photograph' versus 'a good bed -- upon which to sleep comfortably'.

The purposes referred to in the uses I suggested as counter-examples to Foot's thesis seem to be purposes which are chosen by (or are purposes of) someone other than society generally or 'those whose word has become law' (GC p.53). I may choose to photograph a bed with

broken springs and a sagging mattress. When I see one, I may say 'Ah! Now there's a good bed'. That utterance would be an example of a use of 'a good A' in which the usual purposes for an A would have little to do with the criteria on which that use of 'good' was based.

On the other hand, I may choose to photograph for an advertisement the kind of bed that is comfortable to sleep on. How is my expression to be analyzed in that case? Does my use of 'good' in that instance come under the category of 'good -- for my purposes', or is it an example of 'good' simpliciter -- 'good' in Foot's sense -- the kind of bed that suits the usual purposes well? This example indicates to me that both sorts of things may go on in an expression of 'a good A'; the A may be good for my purposes, and it may also be the kind of object Foot would say was a good A. But Foot has said that it is one thing to speak of 'a good A' and another thing to speak of 'a good A for so-and-so's purposes'. What would Foot say of examples where it appears that both things are going on?

If I call an A a good A because the object suits my purposes (and my purposes for the object coincide with those Foot considers determine the criteria for goodness of that subject), then would Foot allow that mine was a correct use of 'good'? If she would allow that it was a correct use of 'good', then according to Foot it would be all right to call an object 'good' because it suited one's own purposes, provided one had the same purposes as society or as the establishment ("those whose word has become law"). If one was a non-conformist or innovator (and one's purposes were therefore different) it would not

be correct, according to Foot, to use 'good' with one's own purposes determining the criteria.

This digression suggests that Foot's thesis could be considered not to be morally neutral; that is, it implies that certain actions are correct, and others are not correct (if talking is considered action): to call a knife a good knife because it suits one's unique or different purposes is incorrect; to call a knife a good knife because it suits the purposes of most people or of a minority whose word has become law, is correct. Foot nowhere suggests that this principle -- doing something because others do it -- should be applied in other areas of action. However, the analogy suggests itself to me. If one should do what others do in the realm of linguistic behaviour, should one do what others do in other realms of behaviour?

When a speaker calls something good and is using criteria other than those Foot claim really were the criteria of goodness, it is not always the case that the speaker's purposes are different from those Foot would consider were the usual. In a case where a couple selects cheese, not for any unusual purpose (say, for photographing), but for eating, their purpose is not different from that of most people. However, the criteria they use in calling a piece of cheese good may still differ from those Foot would consider to be the criteria for the goodness of cheese; the criteria might differ because the couple's tastes or preferences differ from those Foot considers determine the criteria for goodness of cheese.

It would appear that, if a mouldy piece of cheese were selected

as 'a good piece (of cheese) (to eat)', that Foot might still object to this use of 'good' because, even though the usual purpose for cheese is to be eaten, mouldy cheddar cheese is not usually considered good to eat. Foot might object that such a use of 'a good A' would be an example of 'a good A -- from his point of view', and as such would not show anything about uses of 'a good A', any more than does an example of 'a good A -- for so-and-so's purposes'.

If Foot answered in this way, it would become extremely important for her to specify a procedure to determine when 'a good A' was used in her sense (the simpliciter sense), and when it was used in the 'for X's purposes' or 'from X's point of view' senses. One might otherwise suspect that Foot was using the criteria employed by the speaker as a basis for his utterance 'a good A', as a basis for deciding whether it was 'a good A' simpliciter, or an example of 'a good A' in one of the latter two senses; if the criteria used were those considered really were the criteria of goodness, then the utterance would be an example of 'a good A' simpliciter; on the other hand, if the criteria used were not those she considered were really the criteria, then she would say that the example was a case of 'a good A' in one of the latter two senses. If this is in fact the procedure she uses to distinguish between the senses of 'a good A' which she mentions, then it would seem that she would be making her thesis true by definition, and (in her own words) would have "bought security at the price of becoming a bore"(c.f. p.20).

Although I can find no examples which would clearly illustrate

what Foot's position would be in cases where a person's tastes or preferences in A's differ, though his purposes for A's are the same as the usual, it would seem that unless an A had the same descriptive characteristics as those considered by Foot to be the criteria of goodness, that Foot might say it was not a good A, even if the purposes for which the A was being selected were the purposes which Foot considers determine the criteria of goodness.

In any event, it is certainly the case that Foot allows only certain purposes to determine what are the good-making characteristics of an A. One of Foot's arguments is that a man will sometimes quite deliberately choose an A which is not a 'good A':

Since a good pen is one which will write well, he will have reason to choose a good pen if he wants to write with it and write well. But what if his purposes are different? Suppose that he wishes to cover a piece of paper with blots?

(GC p.57).

In that quotation and in the following, Foot implies that, if a man's purposes are different, the object he chooses which will be conducive to the achieving of his purposes is not 'a good A'.

For instance, someone going to a tailor, or engaging a teacher, will usually have reason to choose a good one, though here again we cannot say that there is a necessary connexion between calling an A a good A and having reasons for choice. For someone may choose a teacher, and even choose him as a teacher -- that is, with an interest in his teaching -- without wanting the teaching to be done well. A wicked uncle choosing a tutor for his nephew would be a case in point.

(GC p.58)

Foot has not shown, in these two cases, that the man choosing a pen, or the wicked uncle, would not say that he was choosing a good

pen or a good teacher. Nor has she shown that they would call the A they have chosen 'not a good A'. In fact, an artist who did want to cover a piece of paper with blots might well select a pen which did just that, and say 'This is a good pen (for covering a piece of paper with blots)', or 'This is a good pen (for my purposes)'.

The above quotations from Foot illustrate the implication in her thesis that only certain purposes (and not necessarily those of the speaker) determine what are the good-making characteristics of an A.

On the other hand, in contrast to the implication of Foot's thesis that a speaker does not affect the criteria of goodness, Hare's thesis is that a speaker's choices determine the criteria of goodness, but he does not claim that a speaker's choices are always so connected in all uses of 'good'. In discussing the above 'pen' and 'teacher' examples, I stated that Foot had not shown whether or not the speaker in each case would call the object he chose 'good'. Followers of Hare's theory might even admit that, in the examples Foot uses, the speaker might well say something like 'I don't want my nephew to learn anything; I don't want to choose a good teacher'. In that usage it is obviously not the speaker's (non-existent) choice of the hypothetical teacher called 'good' which makes that teacher a 'good teacher'. But this would not dismay followers of Hare in the least, for they would claim that 'good' in this particular use (a) was not used in its evaluative sense, and (b) was related to somebody's choice. They would claim that the reason 'good' could be applied in this particular

case was because somebody had reasons to, and sometimes did, choose a teacher of the type referred to in this case as a 'good' teacher.

Hare does not suggest that a speaker's choices are always connected with all uses of 'good'. He claims rather that they are so connected in the evaluative use of such words, and, more importantly, that it is this evaluative use (connection with choices) that gives ethical words their 'raison d'être'

It must be emphasized that it is not part of my thesis that moral words are used prescriptively in all contexts; and it makes sense to call them 'moral' even when they are not so used. But on the prescriptive uses the other uses depend.

I do not in the least wish to deny that moral judgements are sometimes used non-evaluatively, in my sense. All I wish to assert is that they are sometimes used evaluatively, and that this is the use which gives them the special characteristics to which I have drawn attention; and that, if it were not for this use, it would be impossible to give a meaning to other uses; and also that, if it were not for the logical difficulties connected with the evaluative use, the other uses could be analyzed naturalistically. Ethics, as a special branch of logic, owes its existence to the function of moral judgements as a guide in answering questions of the form 'what shall I do?'¹

The suggestion by followers of Hare would be that, if the wicked uncle did call the kind of teacher he did not want to choose, 'a good teacher', he would be doing so because somebody chooses that type of teacher.

Foot does admit that somebody does choose this kind of teacher:

Then the one who hires is the one who has a direct interest in what is done, and will normally want it done well. For instance, someone going to a tailor, or

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R.M. Hare, Freedom and Reason (hereinafter referred to as 'FR'), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1963, p.22.

engaging a teacher, will usually have reason to engage a good one

(GC p.58)

That most men must have a reason to choose good pens depends on the purposes which we all take for granted in talking about good and bad pens at all; we cannot suppose that the standard case is that of wanting pens for the creation of blots, or undecipherable marks, without disassociating pens from writing, and changing the concept pen. The necessary connexion lies here, and not in some convention about what the individual speaker must be ready to choose if he uses the word 'good'.

(GC p.57)

Without trying to decide whether Foot's use or Hare's use is the evaluative use or the more important use, or the like, one might attempt to show that both uses involve purposes, and that the dispute is about whose purposes should determine the criteria for goodness in utterances of 'a good A'. One might argue that the purposes to which Foot's use of 'good' (the use of 'good' with which Foot is primarily concerned) is connected, are the purposes of some person, or the usual purposes for which a thing is used in society, even if not the purposes of the speaker. The uncle's remark might be explained as follows: 'I don't want to choose a good (for the usual purposes) teacher. (My purposes are different) I don't want my nephew to learn anything'.

In that case a good (for the usual purposes) teacher is a bad teacher (for the uncle's purposes); and a bad (for the usual purposes) teacher is a good teacher (for the uncle's purposes).

Unless Hare and Foot and their followers are content to rest the dispute at the point where they agree that 'good' is actually used in such a way that sometimes 'for the usual purposes' is implied, and

sometimes 'for X's purposes' is implied, it would seem that the argument would once again reduce to claims about whether 'good' can be used, or is correctly used, in both these cases. Foot attempts to deny that an individual can decide for himself the criteria of goodness, by denying that he can (or, can correctly) use 'good' when it implies 'for my purposes'. Hare, on the other hand, attempts to show that any use of 'good' when it implies 'for the usual purposes' is dependent on, or derived from, or logically secondary to, or gets its meaning from, its use when based on an individual's choices (implying 'good for my purposes'). The question of the relation of purposes to uses of 'good' will be discussed in Sections III and IV.

One other argument connected with purposes, which Foot offers against the thesis that a man can decide for himself what is evidence for rightness and wrongness, or goodness and badness, is this: once a speaker has chosen his purposes, then what is good for those purposes is a plain matter of fact.

He can choose what he will try to do, which games he will play, and so on; but given his purposes, and in general his interests, it is a plain matter of fact that particular A's will be good for his purposes, and from his point of view.

(GC p.53)

To what extent does this negate the idea that a man may decide for himself the criteria for his use of the word 'good'? Again, any answer depends on what is going to count as criteria, and what is meant by 'decide for himself'. For if I have as my purpose, to play hockey and score goals, then what particular kind of stick will assist me in

accomplishing my purpose may well be a matter of fact. That is, I might try several radically different styles of sticks, and with one I may score more goals. That stick, as a matter of fact, was a good one (provided I scored the goals because of the difference in that stick), and I did not decide on the specific characteristics which the stick possessed (curved blade and strong handle) as criteria for goodness. But in another sense I have chosen, or decided on, or affected, the criteria for my use of 'good' when I pick a stick and say 'This is a good stick'. For the basis I am using for calling the stick good in that case, is that it suits my purposes; I might at another time pick a stick which is not conducive to scoring goals, but rather is more conducive to playing defensive hockey, and hand it to someone saying 'This is a good stick', using as a basis for that use of 'good' that it suits his purposes.

So, having chosen my purposes, what will suit my purposes may be a matter of empirical investigation, but in choosing to use 'good' to relate to my purposes rather than someone else's, I have affected the criteria of goodness; i.e., the descriptive characteristics of the object I call good may differ from the characteristics of objects named by the same word and called good by other people. But even then, may it be said that I have decided what the criteria for my use of 'good' will be? If a situation is such that if I decide to A, then B will follow, then by deciding to do A have I decided to do B? In some sense I have, but if I am unaware that choosing A means that B will follow (e.g. by deciding to play hockey and score goals, it follows that,

for me, the stick most conducive to that end will be curved and strong-handled) then in another sense I have not decided what will be the criteria of goodness.

But this line of argument is, I think, beside the point. What is at issue is whether an individual can call objects which suit his purposes 'good', or whether there are certain characteristics of objects which just as a matter of fact make that object a good A whether or not the object suits any particular speaker's purposes.

All I require to show is that a man can use 'a good A' where his purposes for, or interests or preferences in, A's (and the resultant descriptive characteristics of the A he calls good) are different from those Foot would claim make an A a good A. It does not damage my thesis to admit that once one decides one's purposes, what suits those purposes may well be a matter of fact.

But can an individual use 'a good A' in such a way? What sense of 'can' is being employed here? Obviously a man can use 'a good A' when the criteria for goodness is based on his own purposes, if 'can' is being used in the sense of 'is physically able to'. Foot is evidently not using 'can' in this sense when she says

No matter what he may do in the way of choosing knives which are M he cannot say 'M knives are good knives' unless M is a relevant characteristic . . .

(GC p.46)

He could not, for example, say that a good knife was one which rusted quickly . . .

(GC p.46)

He might resolve to read only novels which would soon send him to sleep, . . . but he could not say that for him

this was the characteristic which made the novel a good novel.

(GC p.53)

It is obvious that a man could physically pronounce the words which Foot claims he could not say. What is the sense of 'can' which she is employing?

It seems that there are two alternatives. One alternative would be to suggest that 'can' was being used in the sense in which some adverb like 'correctly' is implied. In connection with the knife example, it seems clear that this is the sense on which 'can' is being used.

Such a theory could not be right, for instance, for the use of 'good' in the expression 'a good knife'; the man who uses these words correctly must use them in conjunction with particular criteria of goodness: those which really are the criteria for the goodness of knives. No matter what he may do in the way of choosing knives which are M he cannot say 'M knives are good knives' unless M is a relevant characteristic, or unless he is prepared to show that M knives are also N knives, and N is a characteristic of the right kind. He could not, for example, say that a good knife was one that rusted quickly, defending his use of the word 'good' by showing that he picked out such knives for his own use. I imagine that almost everyone would agree about this, saying that there are some cases in which the correct use of the expression 'a good A' requires that one set of criteria rather than another should be used for judging the goodness of things. *

(GC p.46)

There are other examples which indicate that in many cases when Foot says that something 'could not be said' or 'should not be said' or 'would not be said', that these phrases are being used in the sense in which it would be incorrect, not proper, wrong, or untrue, to say the

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The emphasis is mine.

things which 'could not be said'.

It is another matter to suppose that in a community which used knife-life objects only for the purpose of ornaments the word which names them would be properly translated as 'knife'.

(GC p.48)

Is it, however, true that a word in another language would be translated by our word 'daughter' whatever the criteria of goodness for those named by this name?

(GC p.50)

. . . surely it is wrong to suppose that even anything expected of a female offspring could be part of what counted when the goodness of a daughter was being weighed.

(GC p.50)

In such examples, Foot would appear to be invoking some notion of correct usage. The suggestion is that a man cannot say such-and-such and be correct, just as one might say to someone who is about to fill in the number '5' as an answer to the arithmetical question 'two plus two equals ____' -- "You can't put that in there!" The sense of 'cannot' when it implies some adverb like 'correctly' is dealt with in Section V.

Another alternative explanation of the use of 'cannot', might be that it is being used in some prudential sense:

Within each society, the goodness of coal is settled by the purposes for which coal is used, while outside such a context it is not clear how anyone could talk about coal as good or bad at all.

(GC p.52)

The suggestion might be, perhaps, that a person could not talk about good coal in relation to some other purposes and be understood.

'Cannot' in this sense is like 'cannot . . . without certain consequences'. For example, "One cannot fill out one's income tax form

incompletely -- and have the form accepted by the authorities".

Certainly it seems that if by 'not be understood' in this particular case, it is meant that those to whom one was talking would not know the descriptive characteristics of the coal one called 'good', (as Foot would probably suggest it should mean), then perhaps one's use of 'good coal' would not be understood. But if by 'not be understood' is meant that those to whom one was talking would not know that one was commending the coal one called 'good', (as Hare would probably suggest it would mean), then perhaps one would be understood even though the hearers would not know the kind of coal to which one was referring.

But it is even possible that the speaker considers his use of 'good coal' important enough to risk not being understood by those who hear him for the first time, and to take the trouble to explain his use to such hearers so that they will understand it in future. Such explanation might take the form of showing that certain coal, which the hearers do not consider good because it does not fulfill the purposes or interests with which they are familiar, is in fact conducive to the fulfilling of purposes and/or interests held by another person (or by other people). It would seem to me that such explanation would be a lesson in moving from belief in absolute values to a recognition of other systems of value -- in much the same way as the contact of the early Greek civilization with their trading nations broke the belief in absolute values and led to a belief in relative values which Plato saw as undesirable and tried to remedy.

Thus the prudential 'cannot' might indicate that there might be certain difficulties for those who spoke in a certain way, but at worst it would seem that these difficulties need not be insurmountable, and might not be considered by a speaker as sufficient reason to refrain from using 'good' in the way it is said he cannot. The role of a speaker in affecting the way 'a good A' is usually or generally understood is discussed further in Section III.

III

Are there uses of 'good' which do not relate to purposes?

One might call a painting a 'good painting', and if asked to explain, say that 'good' was used in the sense of 'a good A for . . .' (e.g. covering a large bare wall). On the other hand, one may explain that it was used in some other sense.

If the couple first mentioned choose a piece of cheese, not as a gift, but to eat themselves, then they are not saying it is good to give; they can be construed as saying it is good to eat. In this, reference is made to their purposes, which appear to be the same as the usual purposes. If, however, their purposes for the A are the usual, the criteria they use when deciding whether or not to call an A 'a good A' (the descriptive characteristics of what they call a good A) yet might not be the same as the usual. Their purposes -- to choose a piece of cheese to eat -- may be the same; their tastes or preferences may be different. They may, for example, like mouldy cheddar cheese. In such a case the reason why the criteria they use for an utterance of 'This is good cheese' are not the usual does not depend on the fact that their purposes for the cheese are different, as it does in most of the previous examples; rather it depends on the fact that their preferences, tastes, or likes are different.

Foot appears to allow that there are uses of 'good' in which the criteria for goodness may differ from the usual criteria for 'a good A' because what is meant in these uses is 'a good A -- for X's purposes'. Although these uses do, I claim, often appear in ordinary language as 'a good A', Foot claims that they are quite a different thing from speaking

of 'a good A' simpliciter.

But since it is one thing to speak of 'a good A', and another to speak of 'a good A for so-and-so's purposes' this cannot be used to show anything about the use of the former expression.

(GC p.53)

I believe she cannot successfully maintain this distinction without either (a) defining utterances of the form 'a good A' which are based on criteria different from those she considers are the criteria for goodness (because the speaker's purpose for the A differs from the usual), as examples of 'a good A -- for X's purposes', or else (b) claiming that an utterance of 'a good A', when used 'for X's purposes' (etc.) is implied, is an incorrect use.

If one were to take position (a), then one would claim that whenever the criteria actually used by the speaker as a basis for his utterance of 'a good A' are different from those which one claims "really are the criteria for goodness" (GC p.46) for that A, (because the speaker's purpose for the A is different from the usual), this utterance is an example of 'a good A -- for X's purposes'. But if one defines 'a good A' simpliciter and 'a good A -- for X's purposes' in this way, then it seems to me that one would be attempting the same sort of move that Foot mentions in connection with the non-naturalists in "Moral Arguments" (p.505-6):

Of course if a descriptive premise is re-defined as one which does not entail an evaluative conclusion, the non-naturalist will once more have bought security at the price of becoming a bore.

If 'a good A' simpliciter were to be defined by Foot as any use

of 'a good A' which is based on the criteria she believes really are the criteria for goodness, then it will not be possible (according to this definition) to present as a counter-example to her thesis, any use of 'a good A' simpliciter which is not based on those criteria, and Foot will have bought security at the price of becoming a bore. If she were to adopt position (a) then she would be by definition, excluding any possibility that an individual's purposes for an A could be the basis for a use of 'a good A' (c.f. p.19f and p.25f). She would not be denying that, in fact, some uses of 'a good A' are based on an individual's purposes for A's rather than on the usual purposes for A's. But then it would seem to be open to one to ask why one should adopt Foot's definition rather than another -- for example, a definition which allowed that an individual's unique purposes for an A could be the basis for a use of 'a good A'. One would require reasons for adopting her definition. Her definition in itself would not be a reason supporting her position; it would be a manifestation of her position.

However, if one does adopt the position (a), and the mere utterance of the words 'a good A' without any uttered qualifying phrase like 'for my purposes', counts as an example of 'a good A' simpliciter, then it is possible to produce examples of 'a good A' simpliciter which are not in fact based on the criteria for goodness which Foot feels are really the criteria for goodness.

If Foot were to define 'a good A' simpliciter in this latter way, then she would be left with the problem that some uses of 'a good A' are in fact based on purposes which are not the usual, and so, having to allow

that uses based on those purposes do show something about the use of 'a good A'. If one feels that this should not be the case, then one might say that such uses are incorrect, and that one should not use 'a good A' in this way (i.e., based upon an individual's purpose for an A).

But even if Foot adopted position (a) and defined the simpler use of 'a good A' as that in which the criteria for goodness are based on the usual purposes for A's, one objecting to her thesis could still offer as examples uses of 'a good A' in which the speaker's purposes are not different from anyone else's, but where even then the criteria for the use of 'good' appear to differ. The examples of selecting cheese, wine, hockey sticks, may serve to illustrate this sense.

In selecting a piece of cheese, a bottle of wine, or a hockey stick, my purpose may well be the same as anyone else's: to eat the cheese, to drink the wine, to play hockey. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the kind of cheese, wine, or stick I select and call 'good', may still differ from those of cheese, wine, or hockey sticks called 'good' by others.

I could be selecting the cheese to bait a mouse trap; in that case, highly odoriferous cheese would best attract the mouse. If I called such cheese 'good cheese', would it then be (according to Foot) an example of 'good for my purposes'? Is that why the criteria for my use of 'good' would be different from those of people who buy cheese to eat themselves? But this is surely not the case, for many people -- not just I -- do buy cheese to bait mouse traps. Odoriferous cheese may well be generally called 'good' by those people. If it is allowed

that there are (at least) two purposes for cheese (human consumption and mouse-trap-baiting) then would Foot be forced to allow two different sets of criteria as legitimate bases for the use of 'good cheese'?

Foot says (GC p.52):

The question is 'What could be counted as good coal'? and the answer seems to be that it depends on what coal happens to be used for Within society, the goodness of coal is settled by the purposes for which coal is used, while outside such a context it is not clear how anyone could talk about coal as good or bad at all.

My question would be "To what extent does an object have to be used for a certain purpose in order for that purpose to legitimately (in Foot's analysis) serve as the basis for a use of 'good'? To what extent does cheese have to be used as mouse-bait before 'good cheese' can legitimately be used by virtue of the cheese's mouse-bait attributes, rather than (or along with) its human-consumption attributes?" If one person uses coal, or cheese, for a unique purpose, does this then count as one of the "purposes for which coal is used" mentioned by Foot above? If so, then it is obvious that an individual can affect the criteria of goodness. But it seems to me that Foot would say, in such a case, that the unique use the individual made of the object was not the purpose for the object, and that, for that reason, the object could not be called 'good'.

How, then, does one determine the purpose for, say, cheese? Does 'good cheese' in its 'proper' use have to refer to the primary use of cheese? If so, how is it established what is the primary use of cheese? Similarly, how is it established which is the function or

the primary function of an object?

Would the primary function of A be Y if a majority of people used A for Y exclusively? Or perhaps if they used A for Y in a majority of the cases that they used an A? Or would the primary function of A be Y if most A's (by numbers, by weight, or by volume etc.) were used for Y?

If some such account were given of "the purposes for which coal (or other object) is used", then it can be seen that if the individual wishes his use of 'good' to be recognized as legitimate, what he must somehow do is get most people to use A's for the purposes he does, or at least get most A's used for that purpose, or some such thing.

If an A does have more than one function, or, if there is more than one purpose for an A and if the criteria for goodness differ for each function or purpose then presumably, according to Foot's analysis, there will be several legitimate uses of 'a good A'. But even if Foot agrees that there might be several purposes for an A, one is still left with the question how it is decided which of the (several) uses to which an A is put are the purposes for an A. For if 'purposes for an A' are going to be arrived at in some quantitative way, then where will the line between acceptable social purpose and individual purpose be drawn? Should one follow the 'democratic' ideal, and declare that something is the purpose for an A if a majority of people so use an A? Or should one follow an 'elitist' ideal, and declare that something is the purpose for an A if "those whose word has become law" (GC p.53) so use an A? Should one say that something is a purpose for an A if a

'significant' number of people so use an A? A number of people, although certainly not a majority, and perhaps not even a large proportion, use cheese to bait mouse-traps. Does this legitimize a use of 'good cheese' that refers to those characteristics of cheese which attract mice (as opposed to men)? Would one individual's use of an A be considered a 'purpose for which an A is used'?

An account of this word 'purpose' and an account of how one should determine what is the primary purpose for an A, or a legitimate purpose for an A, is required. But I would want to know what procedures to use, in the case of conflicting accounts, to determine which account (if any) is 'correct', and which is 'incorrect'. For Hare and Foot and I can all give an account of 'purpose' such that it supports our individual positions, and lacking any agreement on procedures to tell which of those accounts is correct, our dispute would be no closer to being solved.

Furthermore, even if the use of cheese as mouse bait is admitted by Foot to be a purpose for, a function of, cheese, then what will be the criteria for this kind of 'good cheese'? Again, even although the purpose is the same the descriptive characteristics of that which is called 'good cheese' may differ. Will these be the kind of characteristics which, in general, attract mice? But if in my house I have a mouse with distinct and unique preferences (he doesn't like the kind of cheese most mice like) then although the purpose for which I am using the cheese is an acceptable social purpose, the criteria for my use of 'good cheese' will again be different from the usual, because the mouse's

tastes are different. Now while it is true that in this particular example it is not a person that affects the criteria, nevertheless the criteria would be different from the usual. Furthermore, the principle illustrated in this example applies to persons. If one's boss is coming to dinner, and prefers very bitter wine, then for that occasion one might buy a brand of wine which is bitter and call that a good wine. If one is in a position in which one supplies items for others' consumption, then what one calls 'good' might well depend on those others' tastes.

Putting aside the complication of my unique mouse, if mouse-trap baiting is allowed by Foot to be an acceptable social purpose for cheese, then how was this decided? How did she decide that it was a purpose on which a correct use of 'good' could be based? What percentage of people must use cheese for this purpose, or what percentage of the total cheese made or sold must be used for this purpose, before it becomes a legitimate basis for a 'correct' use of 'good'? Forty per cent? Twenty-five per cent?

If this kind of account were given of 'the purposes for which A is used', then it can be seen that if the individual wishes his use of 'good' to be recognized as legitimate, what he must somehow do is get a large enough section of the population to use A for the purposes he does. He will not likely pay heed to a stricture that he should not say what he does, for the success of his mission depends on his continuing his use of 'good', and on getting others to adopt it. His mission might be accomplished in a number of ways, one of which might be

writing in philosophy journals that the 'proper' use of 'good' is the use he uses, and that one should not use 'good' in any other way.

The descriptive characteristics (criteria) of an A which a speaker calls a good A may differ from the descriptive characteristics of A's that most people call good A's, even when the purposes of the speaker are the same as the usual. Even if one assumes that the usual purpose for cheese is human consumption, the descriptive characteristics used as a basis for calling cheese good may differ, because some people like the taste of tangy cheese and some like bland cheese; some like new cheese, some like mouldy cheese. Even if one assumes that the usual purpose for wine is human consumption, some people like red wine, some like white wine; some like sweet wine, others like bitter wine.

Therefore, even granted that these persons select cheese or wine for their own consumption (the usual purpose), the cheese or wine they select and call 'good' may vary widely in its descriptive characteristics. These uses of 'a good A', which may be based on characteristics other than those Foot claims are really the criteria for goodness, cannot be dismissed by classifying them as examples of 'a good A -- for X's purposes', and implying that that accounts for the differences in criteria of goodness. For although it is true that these uses could be construed as 'a good A -- for X's purposes', nevertheless each individual's purpose for the A is the same as the purpose for which the A is usually used, and so the differences in criteria for goodness cannot be accounted for by attributing the difference to differences in pur-

poses. The difference in criteria seems to be accounted for by the fact that each of these persons may like to eat cheese having different characteristics from cheese others like to eat, or that each likes to drink wine having different characteristics from wine others like to drink.

I am suggesting, then, that there are in ordinary language, occurrences of 'a good A' in which the kind of A called by some 'a good A' differs from the kind of A called by others 'a good A'. I am suggesting that sometimes this difference stems from the fact that some people's purposes for A's differ from others', and even the same person's purposes for A's may differ from occasion to occasion. I am suggesting also that sometimes the difference in criteria for goodness does not stem from differences in purposes, but rather stems from differences in likes or preferences. I would also suggest that these differences in descriptive characteristics of 'a good A' may stem, even at times, not from differences in the speaker's purposes, likes, or preferences, but from differences in the purposes, likes, or preferences of other people concerned in the situation. For example, my purpose in buying a bottle of wine may be a purpose usual for wine -- to have a beverage which will please those at a dinner party I am giving. My tastes may even be the same as the usual. But the object I call 'a good bottle of wine' in that context may still have descriptive characteristics different from the usual, because the preferences of my guests may differ from the usual.

Examples of the kind of object where descriptive characteristics

or criteria for a speaker's use of 'a good A' vary, not because the purposes for which the A will be used are different, but because tastes or preferences differ, might be all kinds of food stuffs ('good cheese', 'good wine', 'good coffee'), and perhaps such things as books, pictures, paintings, cars, houses. In fact, examples will occur for any object, whenever some people do prefer an object with certain descriptive characteristics, and others prefer an object of the same name with different characteristics.

I had earlier mentioned 'hockey stick' in the list of objects concerning which people might differ over the criteria for 'a good A', while having the same purpose for an A. Suppose I wish to play hockey well -- that is to say, to be able to stop the puck, to carry it up the ice, to shoot on goal with speed and accuracy (or however one wishes to describe 'well'). My purpose in choosing a hockey stick can be said to be the same as the usual purpose for hockey sticks. However, the stick I choose and call 'good' may have different characteristics from one someone else may choose and call 'good'. Mine may have the blade at a different angle; it may be lighter or heavier; it may be longer or shorter. The reason it may have different characteristics in this case is that I do not have exactly the same physique as someone else. My arms may be shorter; therefore I choose a stick with a blade at a sharp angle. I may be shorter; therefore I choose a shorter stick. My wrist muscles may be proportionately stronger than my arm muscles; therefore I choose a light-weight stick. What will be a good stick for me, then, will differ because my physi-

que differs.

There are many sorts of examples in this category: certain kinds of tools (lawn-mowers, rakes, shovels), wearing apparel of all kinds, perhaps even cars, if the seating and dashboard arrangements of one car better suit one's physical make-up than do the arrangements of another car.

Now, although it would seem that people do use 'good' in the foregoing ways, with resultant differences in criteria, and although I hope I have shown that it is not always open to one to attempt to dismiss all these uses as examples of 'good -- for his purposes' (implying that those purposes are different from the usual) and thus account for the difference in criteria, nevertheless Foot might still claim (i) that these are examples of 'good -- from his point of view' (GC p.53), or (ii) that all these kinds of uses (in which the criteria are different from the usual) are 'incorrect'.

I would deal with objection (i) in the same way as the objection that some uses of 'a good A' are really examples of 'a good A -- for his purposes' (c.f. p.19f, 25f and 37f). Foot's argument would then similarly reduce to either (a) the defining of terms so as to rule out, as a counter-example, any use of 'a good A' which was based on criteria other than the usual -- in which case Foot has "bought security at the price of becoming a bore", and one could ask why one should accept her definition rather than another, or (b) a claim that any use of 'a good A' where 'from his point of view' was implied was an 'incorrect' use.

IV

I have been stating that in certain of the examples in Section III, the speaker's purposes for an A, and society's purposes for an A, are the same. If the purpose for a car (for example) is to permit the driver to drive from A to B in comfort, then one's purpose for a car may be the same as the usual, and still one may differ with others over which characteristics a good car must have, because one has unusual physical characteristics which need to be accommodated if one is to be comfortable. But if society's purpose, or the actual purpose, for a car is to permit the average man to drive from A to B in comfort, then the individual's purpose in buying a car is not usually the same. The individual buyer is usually not concerned with the average man's comfort in a particular car, but rather with his own personal comfort.

If it is a reference to the average man's comfort, rather than a reference to the individual buyer's comfort, which is included in the concept of the purpose for a car, then the individual buyer's sense of 'a good car' could be dismissed by Foot as an example of 'a good car -- for his purposes' (which are different from society's, or from whatever purposes determine what are the good-making characteristics of 'car', according to Foot). And so it is important to establish what is the purpose of an A.

What is, for example, the purpose of a fuel? Is it simply 'to burn and provide energy'? Or does some idea of cost enter into the purpose, such that the purpose for a fuel is 'to burn and provide energy at low cost'? Consider the case of a company deciding which of

many fuels to use in its fleet of vehicles or aircraft. If the company considered the former the function of a fuel, then they might say of fuel x that 'it is a good fuel, but it is too expensive'. On the other hand, if they considered the latter as the function of a fuel, then they might say of the same fuel x, that 'it is just not a good fuel -- because it is too expensive'. I suggest that in this and similar examples, one does encounter both ways of talking, indicating that people have different conceptions of the function of an object.

1. But what is the purpose for, or the function of, a car, or of fuel, or of any object?

2. How is an answer to (1) arrived at?

3. How should an answer to (1) be arrived at?

4. In the case of conflicting answers, what procedures should be used to determine which answer (if any) is correct?

What is to be counted as the purpose for an A, according to Foot? I expect that the account of 'purpose' that would be offered by Foot would have something to do with the meaning of the word; some account like:

we cannot suppose that the standard case is that of wanting pens for the creation of blots, or undecipherable marks, without dissociating pens from writing, and changing the concept 'pen'.

(GC p.57)

I suggest that, judging from this example, Foot's test for whether use x is a legitimate purpose for, or function of, an A, is whether, should x become the standard case of the purpose for which A is used, the concept A would change.

Now it remains to be investigated how to determine whether a word is like 'pen' in this respect -- or even if 'pen' is as Foot describes -- and when a word is not like 'pen' in this respect. Would we be changing the concept 'cheese', for example, if the standard case became that of wanting cheese to bait mouse-traps? In fact, was the concept 'cheese' changed when people began to use cheese, not only for their own consumption, but also to bait mouse-traps? Or was the concept 'cheese' changed when people began to eat cheese, not only in slices or wedges, with bread, but also began to melt it into various types of casserole dishes? How are we to tell what would change a concept?

As in the case of 'purpose' (c.f. p.41) a general account of 'concept' would be required: first, an account which would describe how to delineate a particular concept; second, an account which would establish what would count as a change in a concept. But if accounts of 'concept' differ, because each of the conflicting sides gives an account which supports its own position, then how should one decide which account (if any) to accept? If one account says "The defining characteristics of 'concept' are M", and another side says "The defining characteristics of 'concept' are N", then on what basis should one decide which account to accept? On what bases do people decide which to accept? These are broader questions involving theories of language, and are not strictly 'ethical' questions at all. This dispute, which is apparently over ethical words, therefore can be seen to involve broader issues.

A person who held that 'concept-changing' was the test of legitimate purposes for A's, might claim that it is a legitimate purpose for a car 'to transport the owner in comfort', but that it could not be considered a legitimate purpose of a car to transport pigs or other goods to market or elsewhere, because if that became the standard use, the concept 'car' would have changed to 'truck' or 'van'. Presumably, according to this view, one could not legitimately call an object A 'a good car' because it efficiently transported goods to market, since if that became the standard case of a purpose for a car, the concept 'car' would change. On the other hand, perhaps one could attempt to show that even if the criteria for goodness became different, the concept 'A' would not change if A's were characteristically used for the purpose for which one uses an A and calls it good. If one could show that, then presumably one's use of 'good' in that instance would be considered legitimate by someone holding the concept-changing view.

If concept-changing is to be the test of whether a given use of an A is to be considered a legitimate purpose of an A (i.e., one on which a legitimate use of 'good' can be based), then it may be that in this view there can be many purposes for certain A's, and any use of 'good' relating to any of these purposes would be considered an acceptable use of 'good'. In this view, discussion would focus on whether using item A for purpose x would or would not result in changing the concept, should it become the standard case of the use of A.

In fact, I would suggest that, for Foot, the ultimate test for an illegitimate use of the word 'good' is the following: if the con-

cept would change should the descriptive characteristics in virtue of which the object is called good become the standard case of the use of the word, then a use of the word 'good' based on those characteristics is illegitimate or incorrect.

It might seem that since 'daughter' simply means 'female offspring', nothing is laid down in the language about the criteria of goodness in daughters, as nothing is laid down about the meaning of 'good female offspring' -- if this has a meaning at all. Is it, however, true that a word in another language would be translated by our word 'daughter' whatever the criteria of goodness for those named by this name? Does it make sense to say that they speak of good daughters, but judge good daughters on quite different grounds? . . . But surely it is wrong to suppose that even anything expected of a good female offspring could be part of what counted when the goodness of a daughter was being weighed. If it were expected, as in Nazi Germany, that a daughter (like a son) should denounce disloyal parents to the police, this still could not be part of being a good daughter; a word which combined with 'good' to give this result would be closer to our word 'citizen' or 'patriot'. Only in the context of a belief that denunciation would lead to regeneration could this be seen as one of the things by which the goodness of a daughter could be judged.

(GC p.50)

The suggestion is that calling such a person a 'good daughter', would be changing the concept 'daughter' (changing the meaning of the word 'daughter'). It would appear from the 'pen' and 'daughter' cases, then, that Foot does hold the view I outlined above, in which 'concept-changing' is the test of whether 'good' is being used correctly or legitimately. In this account, consideration might be given to the differences of purposes, or of preferences, or of physique, or to other differences of individuals. The descriptive characteristics of 'a good A' would be allowed (in this account) to vary

with the individual, but only up to the point where the concept 'A' would change, should the descriptive characteristics used as a basis for calling the object 'a good A' in such a case, become the standard case. The criteria for goodness, in this account, might vary to a large degree, depending as they would on the individual's purposes, his tastes or preferences, and/or his physical make-up.

But I am not sure that Foot takes this liberal view. I suggest that, although Foot does regard concept-changing as the test for illegitimate uses of 'good', her ideas of particular concepts are such that very many persons' uses of 'good' would change these concepts, and thus would be considered by her to be incorrect uses. For example, she says (GC p.52-53):

. . . we are not allowed to give as support for a judgement of aesthetic merit the mere fact that a book passes the time easily, or makes us cry, or cheers us up. That when we speak about a good book or picture we do very often mean to judge it as a work of art depends on the role which these things have, though perhaps in the lives of a minority whose word has become law.

Here Foot would seem to be suggesting that the concept 'book' would change if the standard case of the use of a book was considered to be reading a book which passes the time easily, or makes us cry, or cheers us up. I would seriously suggest that, quantitatively at least, these latter purposes presently are the standard case for books. I think Foot recognizes this point when she says that in this case at least, it is a minority who set the standards by which the object should be judged. She might argue that whatever were the standard purposes for books, or whatever was an individual's purpose for

books, that neither of these things would have anything to do with aesthetic merit; that aesthetic merit "depends on the role which these things have, though perhaps in the lives of a minority whose word has become law". Why is it that in this case it is a minority who are allowed to determine the purpose of an object? Why, in this case, is it not the overwhelming majority's purposes for books that determine what is a legitimate use of 'a good book' or 'a good picture'? How is it to be found out when the purpose of an A is determined by the use to which it is put by a majority of people, and when is it determined by the use of a minority? How is it decided which minority is to be considered as determining the purpose of an A?

It would appear in this case that Foot holds a particular concept of 'book' which many do not share, and still she claims that it is this concept which sets the standard for good books. Similarly, I think that many would disagree with her assertion that "No one could be counted as a bad father because he failed to make a living, though he tried as hard as he could" (GC p.51). Only those people who agreed that persons should be judged on their intentions alone, as Foot believes, rather than on some combination of their intentions and how well they succeed in achieving their intentions (as others believe), would agree with such an assertion. The 'book' example and the 'father' example indicate to me that her concepts of 'book' and 'father' differ from those held by others, including me. Consequently, although she holds the concept-changing view -- which might appear to many to be a reasonable view, (because their own use of 'a good A' does not change

the concept A as they understand it) -- nevertheless when it comes to a discussion of the conjunction of 'good' with particular words, she disallows other uses of 'a good book' or 'a good father', because these uses, if they became the standard case, would change the concepts as she understands them.

But what is Foot's view of concept-changing?

It may be that Foot believes that a change in the good-making characteristics of an object is sufficient to constitute a change in the concept. If this is so, then it is evident that Foot and others (including me) will have different concepts of 'book', since we do not agree on what the good-making characteristics of a book are. An example which indicates that Foot holds this view is contained in the passage on 'daughter'. Foot suggests that all characteristics of those called by this word in another language might be the same as those called by "our word daughter" (GC p.50), but yet if those others were called 'good' for different reasons than are those called 'daughters', then it would be wrong to call those others by our word 'daughter'.

If Foot includes a reference to the criteria of goodness of an A in the concept 'A', then obviously any change in the criteria for goodness will result in a change of the concept. This account of concept might be something like: "The concept 'A' involves x, y, and z; and z is the criterion for goodness". In this account, if one began calling A's good because of the characteristic y, then this would constitute a change in the concept A (if this became the standard use).

Foot's argument would reduce to saying that:

SINCE (1) the concept in question includes some reference to the good-making characteristics belonging to the concept,
 THEN (2) one cannot use as criteria for 'good', criteria other than those which do belong to the concept in question,
 BECAUSE (3) to do so would be to change the criteria for 'good' and therefore to change the concept in question.

This account of 'concept' and 'concept-changing' implies that:
 IF x has (only) characteristics a, b, and c; and c is the criterion for goodness,
 AND If y has (only) characteristics a, b, and c; and b is the criterion for goodness,
 THEN x and y are not the same concept.

But Foot implies that this is not the only way a concept may be said to change. In the 'pen' example she appears to claim that a concept includes some reference to purpose, such that if the purpose of the object changes, the concept has changed, and implies that the object should be called by another name. Of the community which had objects which looked like knives, but were never used for cutting, and rather were used for some other purpose, Foot says:

If asked whether they had knives we should not say 'Yes, but they use them for quite different purposes from us', but rather 'No', explaining that they did as a matter of fact have things just like knives, but that these were actually markers.

(GC p.47)

Foot evidently considers here that if the purpose of an object were

different, we would not call it by the same name -- or at least, if we did, we would be changing the concept in question.

This account of 'concept' and 'concept-changing' implies that:
 IF x has (only) characteristics a and b, and c is the purpose of x;
 AND IF y has (only) characteristics a and b, and d is the purpose of y;
 THEN x and y are not the same concept.

But neither of these accounts specifies any procedures to establish which of two conflicting accounts of the concept represented by a word is correct. If one says, for example, that the concept 'car' includes only some set of physical characteristics, and includes no reference to any particular purpose, then what would be the procedures to use to prove that claim wrong? Consider disputes over purposes which actually do occur. Is procreation the sole (legitimate) purpose for the sex-act? Is giving pleasure the purpose for the sex-act? Or is obtaining pleasure the purpose for the sex-act? Persons living in the same geographically-defined community may use the same word or words to name this activity, yet it seems evident that even among those people who label the activity with the same word, there is not unanimous agreement as to the purpose of the activity. Are these people then employing different concepts? Which concept is correct? Which concept -- and which purpose -- should be considered as the basis for a legitimate, or proper, or correct use of 'good'?

What is the purpose of education? Even if one were to judge only from what is written in philosophy of education, one would see that there is not agreement on the purpose of education. Are people

then employing different concepts of education in such writings? Which concept is correct? Which concept should be considered as the basis for a correct use of 'good'? What is the purpose of a university? Is it to propagate knowledge only, or is the purpose of a university to act as an agent of social change? In the face of actual controversies like these, are there agreed-on procedures to determine which answers are correct?

It would seem that, in order to support her theory, Foot would have to show that other conceptions of certain concepts are wrong, but she specifies no procedures which would do so -- except to declare that the concept A is such-and-such, or that the meaning of a word is such-and-such, or that the criteria of goodness for a word are such-and-such. She says:

. . . a man can only be said to be a good father if he looks after his children as best he can.
(GC p.50)

. . . good friends are those who want to help us rather than those who actually have the capacity to succeed.
(GC p.51)

. . . the standards by which farming is judged depend on the meaning of the word, since what counts as farming is only something which has a particular point.
(GC p.50)

Good riding is the kind of riding likely to achieve the characteristic purposes of the rider, not those which a particular individual may happen to have.
(GC p.58)

But others might make similar assertions which conflict with those which Foot makes; what procedures should one use to determine whose

assertion is correct? One might say, for example, that a man can be said to be a good father only if he actually does provide some minimum standard of care for his children, and that if he fails to provide this care, then he is a bad father, regardless of his vain attempts to provide such care.

Discussion, in such disputes, may come to focus on the concept of fatherhood, or the purpose of friendship; but if agreement is not reached on these things, then what procedures should be used to establish whose concept is correct, or which purpose really is the purpose of friendship? If agreement is not reached, then once again the dispute typically seems to reduce to a claim on either side that the other is wrong or incorrect about some aspect of language; or to claims that something is or is not the case about language; and again no procedures are agreed on for deciding which claim is true.

Foot's account might be that the reference to purpose, or to particular criteria for goodness, which (according to her) are included in the concept, is a necessary characteristic of the concept A, such that if it were not present, the object in question would not be an A.

Suppose I wanted to call an object x a 'good car' because it transported farm produce well. Or suppose I wanted to call object y a 'good pen' because it created blots. Is Foot arguing that such an object should not be called a 'good car' or 'good pen', but still may be called a 'car' or 'pen'? It would seem probable that Foot would claim that the range of characteristics an x may have and be called an 'A' is wider than the range of characteristics it may have and be

called a 'good A'. Or is Foot arguing that such an object should not be called a 'car' or 'pen' at all? The former alternative would appear to be the more reasonable interpretation, for if this were not true, then there would be no 'bad A's', for as soon as an object had the kind of characteristics which would make it a bad A, it would cease to be an 'A' at all. What about such things as knives? If an object does not cut well, perhaps it is not only not a good knife; perhaps it is not even a knife at all? If an object creates blots and undecipherable marks on paper, perhaps it is not a pen at all?

One claim that calling an object x a 'good A' is incorrect, may be based on the latter alternative: a claim that the object is not an A at all. An object x creates ink-blots all over a page; it is not a good pen because it is not a pen at all. A female offspring who turns in her parents to the Gestapo is not a good daughter because she is not a daughter at all. This kind of claim is based on a claim concerning the necessary characteristics of a concept 'A'. The claim is that it is a necessary part of a concept (and a necessary condition for the proper use of the word which represents that concept) that a specific characteristic be the criterion of goodness, and/or that a specific purpose be involved. Otherwise, if either of these two conditions are lacking, the claim is that it is incorrect to use the concept or word in referring to an object lacking these characteristics.

It would seem that one must here investigate this question of the necessary characteristics of a word. What characteristics, or how many characteristics of a certain list, must an object have in

order to be (called) an A? If an object does not now cut, but did at one time, and also has the physical shape of a knife, is it now a knife? If an object creates undecipherable marks, but is built like a pen, is it a pen? If an object is built like a car, but is used only for transporting goods (i.e., is used like a truck), is it a car, or is it a truck? If a person is the female offspring of another, then is she a daughter no matter what her subsequent behaviour? Or, in addition to being a female offspring, are there other characteristics she must have before being (correctly) called a daughter? Are Goneril and Reagan not really King Lear's daughters after all?

How should answers to these kinds of questions be arrived at? What are, for example, the necessary characteristics of 'daughter'? If one group of philosophers claims that unless a female offspring behaves in certain ways, she is not a daughter (i.e., that this kind of behaviour is a necessary condition for applying the word 'daughter'), and if another group disagrees, saying that the necessary characteristics of 'daughter' are only that the person be a female offspring; then, again, how should these rival claims be arbitrated? One side can present samples of use which support its view (even if these samples have to be from its members' own speech and writings), and the other side can present samples which support its use. In the face of conflicting examples, each side's claim may again reduce to saying that the uses which conflict with its view are incorrect uses, and that one should not say such things. If the arguments do reduce to this, then the concepts 'incorrect', 'correct', 'wrong', 'right' et cetera, are

the key concepts, and agreement as to what they are must precede agreement on these other questions like "What are the necessary characteristics of 'daughter'?"

Any claim, then, that a use of 'a good A' is incorrect because the object in question is not an A at all (and that using 'A' to refer to the object would therefore be changing the concept 'A'), may ultimately reduce to an argument about the characteristics an object is required to have for it to (properly) be called an 'A', and the settlement of that argument may itself depend on agreement as to what an 'incorrect' use, or 'misuse', or 'proper' use, is. It would seem, then, that unless agreement could be reached as to the proper, legitimate, or correct use of 'incorrect' ('misuse', or 'proper'), and unless from that agreement came agreement as to the characteristics an object is required to have for it to properly be called an 'A', that the idea of concept-changing considered in this section will not settle the dispute concerning uses of 'a good A', but rather, any discussion of 'concept', of 'concept-changing', or of particular concepts, will serve only to illustrate again the dispute over words like 'incorrect', 'correct', 'right', and 'wrong'.

Thus there are so far, two sorts of disputes concerning concept-changing. The first occurs (see p.57) when parties agree on the descriptive characteristics which must be present in an object for the object to be properly called an A, but disagree as to which characteristic should be used as a basis for calling the A 'good'. For example, they both agree that an object must have characteristics a, b, and c,

if one is to properly call it an A, but they disagree as to whether an A is used for x-ing or whether it is used for y-ing. In the former case, an A would be a good A if it x-ed well. In the latter case, an A would be a good A if it y-ed well. The parties might agree that an object should be called a car, but might disagree as to whether it was a good car.

The second sort of dispute occurs (see p.58) when parties do not agree on the descriptive characteristics which must be present in an object for the object to be properly called an A. For example, one party might claim that an A must have characteristics a, b, and c; another party might claim that an A must have characteristics b, c, and d. In the case of an object with characteristics b, c, and d, the first person would deny that the object is a good A -- because the person would deny that the object is an A at all. Thus one person might claim that a process which furnished a child with voluminous information was 'a good education', while another might disagree, saying that a process which did not teach the child to think critically was not an 'education' at all.

The distinction is not as sharp as I have so far drawn it. The first sort of dispute may sometimes be considered to be an example of the second, in that someone might claim that the calling of an object 'good' on the basis of a specified characteristic is itself a characteristic which is required for the object to be properly called an 'A'. Thus Foot says (GC p.50) "Is it, however, true that a word in another language would be translated by our word 'daughter', whatever

the criteria of goodness for those named by this name? Does it make sense to say that they speak of good daughters but judge daughters on quite different grounds?" Foot indicates that she does not think it makes sense to do so.

I do not think that Foot's claim is always based on the consideration that the object in question is not an A at all. I am unclear as to her position, however. Her 'book' example makes it appear that she is not disputing that the object in question is a book, but is disputing that certain kinds of books are good books. In the 'pen' and 'daughter' examples, however, it does appear that she may be claiming that the things in question are not 'pens' or 'daughters' at all.

If this latter is her claim, then I would dispute with her as to the characteristics necessary for a proper use of these words, and we would become embroiled over correct and incorrect usage, as we tried to give examples to show what the necessary characteristics were.

The former position, which allows that the object in question is an 'A' (a book, for example), but denies that it is a good A, appears weak for the following reasons: if the fact that the object is being called a good A (either by Foot or by another) in virtue of a particular characteristic, is not a fact which either detracts from, or contributes to, its A-ness (that is, if Foot allows that the object is an A whether or not the object is called 'good' in virtue of this particular characteristic), then: (i) one may ask how this characteristic was seized upon as the criterion of goodness; (ii) and one may ask why it should be the criterion for goodness, and (iii) one may ask in what

way the concept 'A' would be changed if some other characteristic is chosen as the criterion for goodness.

In explaining (iii) one might describe the puzzle as follows: this account of concept-changing allows one to use 'a good A' even when the criteria for goodness are different from the usual -- but this account asserts that in so doing, one is changing the concept 'A'. Since this account admits (by allowing one to retain the use of 'A') that one is not changing the necessary characteristics of the concept or word, then what is being changed? Obviously it seems that what is being changed is only some assessment as to what is to be considered as the good-making characteristics. Again, as on page 63 the argument may reduce to inconclusive counter-assertions as to whether a reference to a specific criterion for goodness is included in a concept or not.

Even if it were agreed that the criterion for goodness was included in a concept, and even if it were agreed, in the case of a particular concept, what was the specific criterion for goodness included in that concept, and therefore the concept would be changed by the use of other criteria -- in this way, and in this way only -- there could still be disagreement as to whether the fact that the concept would be changed constituted a reason for using a word in this way, or whether it constituted a reason against using a word in that way.

Is there anything wrong with changing a concept? Any answer to this question seems to involve a theory concerning the proper purposes and functions of a language. Perhaps the purpose of a language is such that allowing for concept-changing is a good thing. Perhaps the fact

that a certain use would result in the changing of a concept is a good thing, and should count as a reason for employing that use.

If Foot is not implying that there is anything wrong with the changing of concept, then an argument which said that a particular use would change the concept in question (e.g. the argument quoted in reference to the concept 'pen' would not be a decisive argument against a particular use (e.g. using 'good' in connection with pens that make blots). The argument would state a consequence of such a use becoming widespread, but that consequence would not be a decisive reason against adopting such a use. On the contrary, for example, if it is claimed the present concept 'wife' requires us to say that a 'good wife' is one whose primary duties are to bear children and cater to her husband, and if one believes that this is not a desirable concept for people to have, then the fact that a certain use of 'good wife' will tend to change the present concept may well be considered by such a person to be a good reason for adopting such a use.

If Foot is implying that it is wrong to use 'a good A' such that the concept 'A' would change, then she is using one of the words which are at the center of the dispute ('right', 'wrong', 'good', 'bad') in an attempt to support her position. Since what is at issue is the use of such words as 'wrong', her use of it in this instance would be challenged by her opponents, and so it would not serve to solve or clarify the dispute, but rather would serve only as another illustration of the dispute.

The answer that Foot appears to give to questions like (ii) is

that, if one did not use the criteria she suggests are the criteria for goodness, the concept would be changed. But in cases like Foot's book example (GC p.52-53), cases in which parties might agree on the descriptive characteristics which must be present in an object for the object to be properly called an A, but disagree as to which characteristics should be used as the basis for calling the A 'good', it would appear that the only changing of the concept which would take place if a different characteristic was used as the basis for calling the A 'good', would be that a different criterion of goodness was being used. (Even at that, one would agree that the concept was changed only if one agreed that a reference to a specific criterion of goodness other than the one which one used oneself, was included in a concept). In these cases, Foot's argument seems to reduce to this: if one used criteria other than those she claims are the criteria, then the concept would be changed; i.e., criteria other than those she suggests are the criteria, would be being used. In other words, if one used different criteria, then different criteria would be being used.

Arguments of the type 'if a, then a' are not usually regarded as good reasons for not doing a. Presumably in this case, the fact that different criteria of goodness would be being used, would not be a good reason, and certainly not a decisive reason, for abstaining from using different criteria of goodness.

In answer to (i), Hare would assert that the particular criteria chosen depend on individual commendatory uses of 'good'. Many people, individually, have found a particular type of A conducive to the ful-

filling of their purposes, or to their liking, and therefore call that kind of A 'a good A'. If a great many people have more or less the same purposes for an A, or prefer more or less the same kind of A, then the descriptive characteristics of that certain kind of A come to be generally used as the basis for calling that kind of A a good A. That is how any 'usual' standard becomes established, Hare might claim.

Hare would be claiming that the purposes and interests which Foot regards as the only legitimate basis for the use of the word 'good' are dependent on, and are made up of, a collection of individual purposes and interests, with those in the dominant majority or "minority whose word has become law" becoming (perhaps) the purposes and interests which Foot feels determine the criteria for goodness of an A. The claim would be that it is through a collection of individuals' decisions on purposes and interests (and therefore on criteria of goodness) that it is determined which are the purposes for, and interests in, an object, which Foot claims determine the criteria of goodness.

I believe it would be a problem for Foot to specify procedures which would allow one to determine, in any particular case, which purposes and interests ought to determine the criteria. Is it the purposes and interests of society which always determine the criteria, according to Foot? If so, what are the purposes and interests of society? One might argue, for example, that the purposes and interests of society are determined by the purposes and interests, not of a dominant majority, but of "a minority whose word has become law" (3C p.53). Or one might say "Despite what everyone thinks, the best interests of

this community are such-and-such". One would again become embroiled in a language dispute of the type: are the purposes and interests of society X, or are they Y?

If a sociology study was entitled "The Purposes and Interests of Society", then it would seem to me that one would find out what was meant, or intended, or referred to, by the title, by examining the procedures used in the collection and analysis of the data. Did the researcher do an empirical study of the purposes and interests of the population at large? Is that what is referred to in this instance by "The Purposes and Interests of Society"? Or did he do an empirical study of the elite -- say, university professors? Is that what the author believes is referred to by "The Purposes and Interests of Society"? Or did he not do an empirical study at all, but did he rather reflect on his own experiences to determine what the purposes and interests of society were?

It seems to me that, as a clue to why the disputes arise, which are referred to in the second-last paragraph above, an observation might be made here to the effect that the above procedures purporting to determine the purposes and interests of society might appear to be connected to ideological (political) systems. It seems to me that the first procedure is compatible with a democratic conception of society; the second, with an oligarchic view of society; the third, with a non-archival view of society.

Foot may not consider it of any philosophical importance, how the purposes and interests of society are determined, and nevertheless

claim that, however it is determined what the criteria for goodness are, it is incorrect to use the word 'good' except in accordance with those criteria. What is missed out is what I consider to be a fact about a language being used; that it can change, and that an individual using that language can play a part, however minute, in changing the language. If 'good' is to be used only in accordance with criteria which are set up in relation to the purposes and interests of society (however that word is defined); then to accept that convention is to commit oneself to one or another type of linguistic government. If society's purposes and interests are determined in an arm-chair by one person, then one is accepting monarchical linguistic government. If society's purposes and interests are determined by, say, analytical philosophers, and one uses 'good' only in relation to society's purposes and interests, then one is accepting oligarchic linguistic government.

If the purposes and interests of society are determined by the dominant majority of individual purposes and interests (democratic linguistic government), then unless an individual's purposes and interests are indicated by his using 'good' in accordance with his own purposes and interests instead of those he believes are society's, then how is it to be known at any particular time just what are the purposes and interests of all individuals, in order to determine what are those of the dominant majority, in order to determine what are those of society?

Society's purposes for coal might change, but under this democratic analysis, such change would be the result of a large number of

changes in individuals' purposes for coal. If these individuals continued to use 'good coal' in accordance with what was previously society's standard for 'good coal', then a situation will arise in which 'good coal' is used in accordance with a standard related to society's previous purposes for coal, which by now no longer are society's purposes.

The situation is somewhat analogous to holding as one's ethical principle that one will do whatever society demands, without realizing that one constitutes at least part of that society, and so has at least a part in deciding what it is that society does demand. If everyone held only that he would do what society demanded, society would demand nothing. Under this democratic conception of society, it is only when a number of individual demands coincide, that 'society' demands. Similarly it would seem that society would, in this conception, begin to have purposes for, and interests in, an A, only when a number of individuals' purposes for, and interests in, A's coincide.

It is of course possible to reject this idea of democratic linguistic government and therefore to disagree that 'good' should only be used in connection with individual's purposes and interests. The claim might be, for example, that one should instead say: "This A does not suit my purposes or preferences, but nevertheless it is a good A; that is, it suits most people's". In such a case, the dispute might center around the question whether the function of, or purpose for, the word 'good' is to commend. If that is the function of 'good', then if one did not use 'good' in connection with one's own purposes

and interests, one would not be commending objects which suited one's own purposes and interests. If one felt that it was important to commend such objects, then one would be reluctant to adopt the way of talking suggested in this paragraph, because one might consider that that way of talking would result in commendation of objects one felt unworthy of commendation; i.e., objects which suited others' interests and purposes rather than one's own. The suggestion made by Hare is that the function of the word 'good' is to commend. From the previous discussions, however, it should be apparent that there may well be disputes over (1) whether the function of 'good' is to commend, and (2) what it is to commend.

Is 'good' used to commend? I am uncertain what Foot's answer would be. It would appear probable that she would hold one of the two following positions:

- (a) that 'good' is not used to commend
- (b) that 'good' is used to commend, but that the proper use of 'good' is to commend an A for certain characteristics and certain characteristics only, and that these characteristics are in some way (e.g. concept-changing) determined by what the A is.

Hare on the other hand, appears to hold that whenever 'good' occurs, whether in 'a good A', or in 'This A is good', the A may be properly commended for any characteristic on which the speaker decides.

If Foot's position is (a), then one is again faced with the problem of two sides, each championing a different use (commend and not-commend) and claiming that the other side's use is a misuse or an

incorrect use.

If Foot's position is (b), -- and it seems evident that it would be -- then again the same problem arises: Is 'good' properly used to commend an A for certain characteristics only?

Most certainly, I feel, the entire discussion above on the comparative positions of Hare and Foot on 'commend', assumes that 'commend' means the same thing to Hare and Foot. I believe that it is likely that it does not. Foot would undoubtedly assert that to use 'good' as she suggests is to commend, whereas Hare would argue that only in using 'good' as he suggests is to commend (or, in his terminology, to use it in its proper evaluative sense).

If the two do disagree on what it is to commend, then again the argument would arise as to which of the suggested uses of the word 'commend' was the correct use of the word.

V

Many of the previous discussions have focused on questions such as 'What sorts of things are criteria?' 'What is the purpose of an A?' 'What are the characteristics an object must have in order to be an A?' 'What are the criteria for goodness of an A?' 'What is the logic of the word "good"?'.

The answers to these questions tend to be phrased in the following grammatical structure: 'Such and such things are criteria', 'The purpose of an A is such and such', 'Such and such are the characteristics an object must have in order to be an A', 'The criteria for goodness of an A are such and such', 'The logic of the word "good" is such and such'. It is those sorts of statements to which I referred on page 14 when I suggested that the structural similarity between 'x is y' statements about physical objects and 'x is y' statements about language obscured crucial differences between them which contributed to the confusion in this philosophical dispute.

In the case of statements like 'The wall is blue', when these are regarded as descriptions of physical objects, there is almost universal agreement as to what are the procedures or tests to invoke to determine, in any particular case, whether such a statement is true. That such procedures or tests are considered conclusive by the disputing parties and/or observers, depends on three prerequisite conditions: (a) that all human beings' perceptual apparatus is similar, (b) agreement that the word in question refers to a characteristic or phenomenon whose presence or absence can be noted by the human perceptual apparatus, and (c) agreement as to what word is used for a

particular characteristic or phenomenon such that if the characteristic or phenomenon is present, it is correct to use the word.

It is because these three conditions do obtain in the case of physical-object statements such as 'The wall is blue', that we can talk about a person describing a situation correctly, or painting a true picture. "What he says is correct", one might say, "I saw it myself."

But what about a person who says "What you call 'blue', I call 'green'. The wall is green"? By his first statement he indicates that he does not share in the agreement I outlined in (c) above. For all those who do share on that agreement, and who judge his utterance from the standpoint of that agreement, his description is not correct. He has called something 'green', when according to that agreement, the word which ought to be used is 'blue'. But in his first statement, this person has also indicated which word he uses instead of the one usually agreed upon. For anyone who shared on the use of that word, or who judged his utterance from the standpoint of that agreement, his description would be correct.

The point I am attempting to make here is that when something is considered to be correct, it is correct within some framework, or from some point of view. In some cases -- like that of colours -- the framework is almost universally accepted, the point of view is one which is almost universally adopted; to such an extent that some people forget that a framework or point of view is involved at all, and rather begin to consider statements in that area as being capable

of being absolutely correct -- that they may be correct no matter what.

In the case of colour words such as 'blue', it would appear that their use is based on the presence of one characteristic; the reflection of light waves within a certain frequency range. Determining whether or not something is 'blue' is then a relatively simple matter of determining whether the light waves reflected are predominantly within this range. However, in the case of a word such as 'wall', many characteristics seem to be involved; it would seem that the length, height and thickness of the object in question must be in a certain proportion, and perhaps the object must even fulfil a certain function, before most people would call the object a wall. Because many characteristics are involved, it may be a more complex matter to arrive at agreement as to whether an object is a wall, than it is to arrive at agreement as to whether the object is blue. Is the stockade of a wilderness fort a wall, or only a high fence?

In the case of words such as 'democracy' or 'freedom', even more characteristics appear to be involved. It is therefore likely to be an even more complex matter to arrive at agreement as to whether such and such is democracy. Some may believe that characteristics a, b, c, and d must be present before something should be called 'democracy', while others may believe that characteristics b, c, d, and e, are required.

The fact that many characteristics are involved means that it is easier for the meaning of such a word to change than it is for words based on single characteristics. People using the language may come

to consider some of the usual characteristics more important than others, and/or may use the word for objects which have additional characteristics not at first associated with the word but which, through use, become associated with the word.

The word 'nark' which (in the United Kingdom) first referred to an underworld character who reported to the police on his underworld colleagues, later came to be used to refer to a policeman who, as an undercover agent, pretended to be an underworld character in order to gather information from his supposed colleagues. The characteristics upon which the change hinged, I imagine, was that in both cases the man (a) pretended to be friends with those with whom he associated, but (b) in fact reported on them to the police. Perhaps as the numbers and/or effectiveness of the police segment of this group increased, the word 'nark' began to become associated more and more with an undercover policeman. It may even be that the North American term 'narc' (meaning 'police undercover narcotics agent') is the result of a change in the term 'nark' caused by a combination of the characteristics 'undercover policeman', the coincidental identity of the phonetical sound of 'nark' with that of the first letters of 'narcotics', and the apparent fact that most undercover policemen in North America are now involved in work involving the sale and use of narcotics.

In any event, such a description shows how, at least theoretically, a change in the meaning of a word based on several characteristics, can come about. In the case of a word based on a single characteristic, such a change does not seem possible, for there is no char-

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acteristic upon which the change can hinge. In any event, would there be any point to such a change? There would seem to be a point to changing some multi-characteristic words: if objects with characteristics a, b, c, d are called A, and objects with characteristics b, c, d, e appear, it may be more convenient or useful to call the latter objects A's than it would be to create a new word for them. If the objects with characteristics a, b, c, d subsequently decline in numbers or relative importance, it may be considered that 'A' refers to objects having characteristics b, c, d, e.

There may be even more of a point in attempting to change the application of some multi-characteristic words -- words like 'democracy' -- when many people have certain attitudes towards the things named by the word. Many people may come to believe that a particular political system, referred to as 'democracy', is something to be desired. If one can then get the political system one advocates referred to as democracy, one will probably gain support for one's system from those people who uncritically believe that if something is called democracy it is desirable, and who do not analyze the situation to see whether there are crucial differences between the system they came to know as democracy, and the system called democracy which one now proposes.

One might even attempt to describe a situation in which there would be a point in trying to change the meaning of some single-characteristic word like 'blue'. If it were decreed that all blue-eyed children were to be killed, there might be some point in some parents

attempting, to show that 'blue' meant not only that the reflected light waves fell within a certain frequency range, but also that they were of such and such intensity, in an attempt to show that 'blue' was a two-characteristic word, and that their children's eyes did not possess both of the necessary characteristics. Or perhaps all such parents would no longer agree with the previous names for colour, and declare that their children's eyes were green, and not blue.

but creating division of opinion as to whether a child's eyes were blue would be a much more difficult task than creating division of opinion as to whether someone was or was not a radical, for example, because many more characteristics are usually involved in the latter word. There would therefore be more chance that people would have some of the characteristics associated with the latter word, but would not have others. If a person holds radical ideas, but only speaks of them to his friends, and does not try to put his ideas into effect, is he a radical? If he publicizes his ideas but does not otherwise attempt to put them into effect, is he a radical? If he has radical ideas, but uses only conventional means in attempting to get those ideas put into effect, is he a radical?

As it seems there are usually no such proscriptions of blue-eyed children, there is usually no point in arguing about the application of such words as colour words, and agreement on the use of particular colour words is therefore almost universal. In the light of such agreement, it is very often considered that statements like 'The wall is blue' are true (or false) in some absolute sense.

Before the advent of computer mathematics and the New Math, arithmetic was viewed by some in such absolute terms. Two plus two equals four -- that was so absolutely true that all manner of jokes were constructed about those people who thought otherwise.

Mathematics, in my experience, is an area within which it is customary to call an answer correct or incorrect. Again, I believe it can be shown that it makes sense to call an answer correct or incorrect only in terms of a particular theory. Consider the classic problem: $2 + 2 = 4$. Is the answer 4 correct? Within certain systems, it is. From certain points of view, it is. But it is possible that people might adopt a mathematical system of the type described by Douglas Gasking in "Mathematics and the World,"¹ one in which $3 \times 4 = 24$. Within such a system, $2 + 2 = 4$ would not be correct. If three mathematicians each adopted a different system, which of their answers to " $2 + 2 = \underline{\quad}$ " would be correct? How would the mathematicians defend their frameworks? Each may argue that his system is easier to work with than the other two. He may claim that it is easier because he has become accustomed to it, or he may claim it is easier because of the nature of the material with which he deals. He may argue for its retention on other grounds.

I claim that the examples I have used in speaking of colour words and mathematical systems show something concerning the use of 'correct' in reference to language; i.e., that 'correct' is only used

1

A.N. Flew (ed.), Logic and Language (Second Series), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1959, Chapter XI.

in relation to a framework. Sometimes the framework results from a relatively simple agreement in the use of words, as in the agreement that such and such word is used for light waves falling within such and such frequencies. Sometimes the framework results from agreement to use a more elaborate system or theory, as in the agreement to use a particular mathematical number system. Sometimes the framework is so widely accepted -- as in the case of colour-words, and until recently, the base 10 number system -- that one tends to forget that it is an agreement at all. But of course, even when there is universal agreement on some framework, as we might imagine there to have been before the Copernican revolution, there is the possibility that another framework, theory, or agreement, might arise to push the one which is currently dominant out of its favoured position. What everyone calls correct today may in future be looked upon from the standpoint of a different theory, framework, or agreement, and be called incorrect. In the sciences, the theoretical revolutions are relatively infrequent. In philosophy, the revolutions or attempted revolutions appear to be much more frequent. My claim, at any rate, is that when something is called correct, it is so called only from a particular point of view, only in terms of a particular theory, only within a particular framework. The extent to which something appears absolutely correct depends on the extent to which that point of view, framework, or theory, is agreed upon and shared.

What does this tell us about Foot's claims concerning correct uses of 'good'? What does it tell us about any philosopher's claim

that such and such is a correct use of a word, and that such and such use is incorrect? I suggest that any such assertions are made from the standpoint of a framework, and so when Foot says that such and such is the correct use of 'good', it is so only according to a particular framework; her theory that

(a) the criteria for the use of the word 'good' "are always determined and not a matter of choice", and that

(b) "where a thing has a function, the primary. . . criterion for the goodness of that thing will be that it fulfils its function well", or

(c) that in the case of other sorts of things, it is the purposes for which a thing is used within a society which determine its criteria for goodness. ("Within each society the goodness of coal is settled by the purposes for which coal is used. . . ").

Or (d) that in the case of yet other things, it is the usual or characteristic purposes for the thing -- even if the thing is used only by a few people within the society -- which determine the criteria. ("Good riding is the kind of riding likely to achieve the characteristic purposes of the rider, not those which a particular individual may happen to have" (GC p.58).

It is from this sort of framework that Foot says "the man who uses these words ('a good knife') correctly must use them in conjunction with particular criteria of goodness".

In the case of 'good', unlike the case of 'blue', it is not the case that one theory about its use is universally accepted -- hence disagreement on whether a particular use is correct or not. It may be

correct according to one theory, incorrect according to another, and there is not agreement as to which theory should be used'. It is for this reason that assertions as to which use of a word is the correct use, do not settle disputes as to how one should use a word. A use may be correct according to one theory and incorrect according to another; the dispute, however, is about which theory to adopt. All the arguments of Hare and Foot which have been shown in the previous sections to reduce to claims about the correct use of a word would seem either to be arguments in which 'correct' is used from the standpoint of the particular framework of the respective theories themselves (in which case they are not arguments for the adoption of the theory involved, but rather are arguments from within the theory, whose force depends upon prior agreement with the theory), or else they are arguments from the standpoint of other frameworks, whose force would depend on agreement in sharing those frameworks.

But it seems evident that this is a dispute where the disputants just do not agree on those standpoints. For example, it is likely that Hare and Foot do not even agree on what it is to commend. It appears that it is precisely this lack of such agreement on some standpoint(s) from which the dispute can be judged, which results in the apparent inconclusive nature of the arguments on both sides.

This is not to say that one must consider all theories equal. From one's own standpoint one may judge theories and declare one better than another. Perhaps there may even be some degree of agreement as to the standpoint from which theories should be judged. But it seems to

is that precisely the same sort of dispute is likely to arise about which standpoint and which criteria should be used in judging theories, as has arisen about what theory and what criteria should be used in using the word 'good'.

It would be possible, I suppose, to admit that in the case of conflicting theories concerning uses of words, that different uses were equally correct (depending upon the standpoint one used to judge the use), just as each mathematician's answer could be considered equally correct (depending on the base used). But this would be an empty concession, inasmuch as one would still have to decide which theory to use; in the mathematics case, which base to use; in the language case, which theory to follow in one's own talking. If one decided to adopt a particular theory, then one would state that other uses were incorrect (according to that theory), but it does not seem to me that one can use as a reason for adopting a theory, the fact that other uses are incorrect (according to that theory). I should like to have other independent reasons for adopting a theory, since the former procedure can be used equally well as a reason for adopting any theory whatsoever. Any arguments about the correctness of a use, then, are arguments from within a framework -- one is indicating that one already holds a certain framework if one pronounces something incorrect -- and so cannot reasonably be used as arguments for adopting that framework. Those arguments which in previous sections have been shown to reduce to claims about correctness, therefore presuppose a theory, and are not decisive arguments for adopting that theory.

I have stated that I consider it possible to admit that various uses are equally correct, although such an admission would not help one to decide what theory to use oneself. If one held, however, that one's theory was the only possible one an informed and intelligent person could hold -- an absolutist view -- then I do not think that one could rationally admit that other uses were correct. One would thereby be admitting, by implication, that it would be possible to hold other theories by the terms of which these other uses were correct.

If one is claiming, for example, to be describing the logic of moral language, it would not do to admit that one's description was only one possible theory among many. If, for example, Hare and Foot were to admit that what they offer us is not a description of the way things are, but rather what they offer us is a theory, one possible way of looking at the uses of 'good', then (provided one accepts the framework of doing things for reasons), one would require reasons for adopting one theory over another. It would not be a reason to say that some types of talk were correct and others were incorrect -- unless the listener had already agreed to the theory by the terms of which such pronouncements were being made. One reason for adopting or rejecting a theory might be that, since (or if) one theory was already widely accepted and widely used, one would tend not to be understood if one did not abide by that theory. But one might not feel that that was, for him, a conclusive reason. One might feel that there were other reasons which outweighed such a reason of convenience. One might feel that these other reasons were important enough to struggle to get one's

way of talking understood by those who at present subscribed to another theory. I believe that one's attitude toward promoting one's way of talking may well be determined by the same sorts of things as determine one's attitude toward promoting one's other beliefs -- political, educational, and so on. There will be conservatives, reactionaries, and revolutionaries in the realm of language, just as there are in the realm of politics. What makes a person one or the other (whether in the realm of language or in the realm of education or politics) is a very broad question and one I do not claim to be able to answer; as linguistic philosophers we may only be concerned that such people do as a matter of fact exist, and that they write articles, theses, and books. On the other hand, others may be concerned rather to present for consideration certain theories and their ramifications, which people may (choose) to adopt, for whatever reasons people adopt theories. I do not propose to enter into any dispute about which of these activities is more valuable.

If it were recognized that philosophers like Hare and Foot were offering us theories for consideration, rather than conflicting descriptions of the way things are, then we would soon become involved in a discussion of reasons for and against taking a particular course of action (adopting theory x). It seems to me that this would be much like the kinds of discussion of so-called normative moral philosophers concerning reasons for and against taking a particular course of action (e.g. telling the truth).

The approach which Hare and Foot take might be considered to be

an attempt to avoid that sort of discussion which proves (to most people, I believe) to be so inconclusive in connection with normative moral codes. It seems to me that they attempt to place themselves on less assailable ground than normative moral philosophers, by claiming to talk about the way language 'is'. When unravelled, their talk is (I believe) seen to be the proposing of theories -- albeit theories which already have followers. I conclude that they are doing the same sort of thing as previous moral philosophers. These latter turn out to be saying "This is (what I propose as) the ethical or moral way to behave. Judgements or actions based on this model are moral actions or judgements". The former turn out to be saying "This is (what I propose as) the ethical or moral use of 'good'. Sentences using 'good' based on this model are moral judgements". In both cases it seems to me that one can ask "Why should I adopt the way you propose?" And in both cases, I believe, it will be equally difficult to arrive at conclusive answers.

It seems evident from previous discussions that Foot's theory has normative aspects. According to it, certain kinds of A's are good, and certain kinds are not good: knives which cut well are good knives; rusty knives are not good knives; novels which put people to sleep are not good novels. At the same time, Foot's theory also specifies how to determine what things are good (c.f. the points in her theory outlined on page 83).

Hare's theory is not devoid of normative aspects. While his theory makes a point of not specifying what particular kinds of A's

are good, it does specify how it should be determined what things are good; i.e., by "universalizable" "decisions of principle" made by each individual speaker. While this theory might at first appear to leave the question 'What is good?' completely open, it does mean that anyone who does not use 'good' in connection with such individual decisions of principle is not using 'good' in its full-force evaluative sense, and is not making true moral judgements. Hare's theory therefore does have the consequence that using a certain basis for deciding what to call good results in a moral or evaluative judgement, while using other bases does not result in an evaluative or moral judgement. In a society where it has never occurred to anyone to decide for himself what things he will call good, but rather the persons in that society use the word 'good' for the same things as does everyone else -- in the same way as they use 'blue', for example -- in such a society, no one would be making moral judgements, according to Hare's theory. To that extent, Hare's theory is not morally neutral, in that it implies that evaluative judgements are (properly) made in certain ways, and not in other ways.

I assume we can all understand why there are disputes in connection with proposals about how to behave. It appears to be almost a universal belief that how one behaves, the actions one performs, somehow matter. Whatever the reason, it appears to be a matter of (at least temporary) fact that some people prefer to live in one way, others prefer other ways, and still others would prefer to see other people live in other ways. Hence the disagreement over normative

ethical theories.

But why is there dispute as to how to talk, or how to use certain words? One answer might be found in a theory which says that one's language involves a way of looking at the world, a way of organizing the world and placing a pattern over it so that one can more easily comprehend and understand it. If more than one pattern is possible, then, from a psychological point of view one may dispute giving up one's own pattern in favour of someone else's, because one has become so accustomed to using one's own. One might ask "Why doesn't the other fellow give up his way of talking and adopt mine?" Furthermore, one may feel that one has rational grounds for not giving up one's way of looking at things, one's way of talking about things. One may feel that one's way is more convenient or more useful than the other fellow's, given one's particular circumstances, purposes or preferences.

The previous two paragraphs assume that in the way people use words there is no connection between talk and action. If this assumption is incorrect, then one could say that there are disputes about how to talk for the same reasons as there are disputes about what to do.

Ethical language, in particular, may have something to do with how one lives one's life. For some people, at any rate, such a connection seems to exist. These people show much less hesitation at calling something 'blue' because everyone else does, than they do at calling something 'good' because everyone else does. Is this because they feel that if they call something 'good' they are somehow committed

to a certain attitude or certain action towards it? For some people, it is a good enough reason, in the interests of common understanding, to attach the same symbol to an object as does everyone else; but for some of these people, it is not a good enough reason to perform some action, or adopt some attitude, because everyone else does it.

For certain words, disputes rage as to how they should be used. Why does a question about how to talk matter so much to Hare and to Foot (or to any philosopher) that they write articles and books on the question? There are other disputes, over words which are not ordinarily considered ethical words -- education, democracy, professional, science. Why are there disputes over such words? I suggest that it could be because of the attitudes and/or actions which are associated with such words by people. For example, if one can manage to get the word 'professional' used in connection with one's occupation, then it is likely that the present public attitudes so far attached to the word will also become attached to one's occupation -- an idea that those in the occupation should receive high pay, an unquestioning acceptance that the professional knows best, etc. Or if one manages to get one's discipline called a science, then the respect and money accorded to sciences in the 20th century will likely follow.

Whether disputes as to how to behave or how to talk arise because one is habituated into a certain pattern of thought and/or talk, and is reluctant to change that with which one is familiar, or whether disputes arise because of associated attitudes and/or actions -- all this is outside the scope of this thesis. It is enough for this

thesis to point out that the disputes are there; that in language, as in action, different theories are offered and obtain followers.

In the case of Hare and Foot -- as in the case of other contemporary philosophers of language -- it is sometimes overlooked that they are offering ways of looking at things, rather than describing the way things are. Surely by now it is clear that it makes no sense to talk about "The way things are" except from the point of view of a particular framework or theory; Hare and Foot are each describing the way things are from the point of view of his or her respective (own) theory. There is not agreement on which of the two theories should be accepted; no conclusive reason for accepting one or the other theory has been given. What would be required in order to conclusively establish which theory was correct, would be agreement on the following points:

- what constitutes criteria (p.3)
- whether it is correct to use incomplete sentences, and what phrases should be, or are, implied after such sentences (p.13)
- whether 'for his purposes' can be correctly implied after 'a good A', and whether 'a good A' -- for his purposes' is a different thing from 'a good A' simpliciter (p.14)
- whether, after 'a good A' it is correct to imply 'for his purposes', or whether 'for the usual purposes' is (correctly) implied (p.21)
- whether one should just agree that 'a good A' is sometimes used when 'for his purposes' is implied, and is sometimes used when 'for the usual purposes' is implied; and that both uses are correct (p.29)

- how to ascertain when a man can (correctly) say such and such (p.42)
- how should one decide what is the purpose of an A (p.41)
- how one should decide what account of 'the purpose of' an A would be correct (p.43)
- whether certain examples of usage which are given as counter-examples to a linguistic theory can be properly dismissed as examples of incorrect usage (p.48)
- how to decide which of varying account of 'concept' would be correct (p. 51)
- how to decide which conceptions of a particular concept are wrong (p. 58)
- how to ascertain which of varying accounts is the correct specification of the characteristics necessary for a correct application of a particular word (p.63)
- whether 'good' is (properly) used to commend, and what it is to commend (p.73)

But in this dispute, it seems that not only is there not likely to be agreement on these points, but there is not likely to be agreement on the procedures which should be used to establish the correctness or incorrectness of these points. Any assertions about what the logic of the word 'good' is, or what the criteria for goodness are, are therefore be disleading if one overlooks the fact that it is agreement which makes statements of the form 'is y' appear indisputable, but in the case of statements like 'The wall is blue'; and that this degree of agreement is not present in the case of certain linguistic or philosophical

philical theories.

Foot's attack on Hare's position is based on certain assumptions related to the above list of points, which Hare very likely does not share; similarly, Hare's theory is based on other such assumptions which Foot evidently does not share.

Agreement as to what uses of language are incorrect presupposes agreement on a standpoint from which to judge those uses. Agreement as to whether Hare's, or whether Foot's, theory is correct or true, presupposes agreement on a standpoint from which to judge those theories. And agreement as to which of several standpoints should be used to judge those theories depends upon agreement on a standpoint from which to judge those standpoints.

Without such agreements, such disputes could be interminable.

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